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COMICS INTERVIEW

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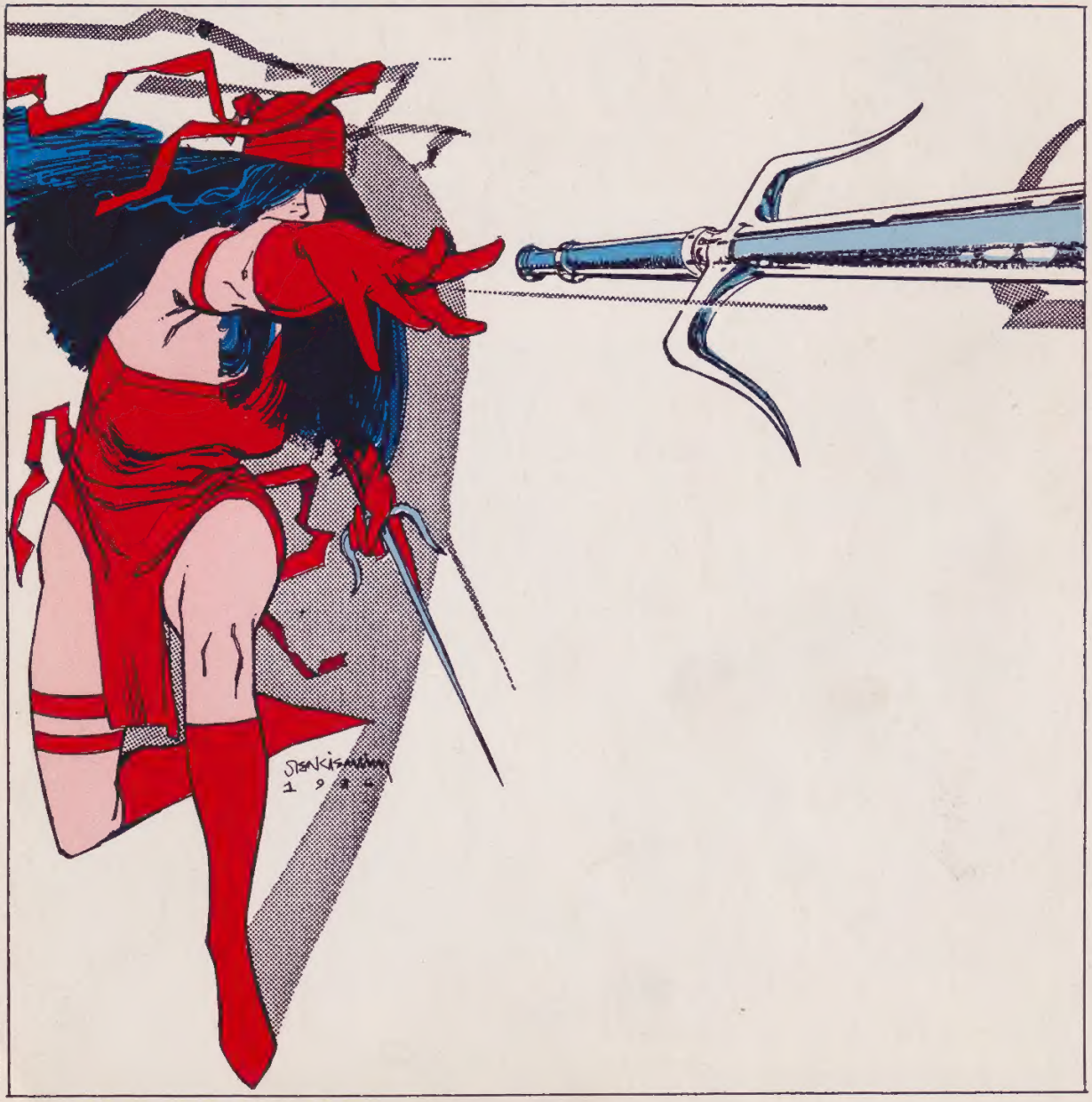

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UP FRONT

INTERVIEW is unique among comics magazines.

Our slogan says it all: **"We let the industry speak for itself."**

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-David

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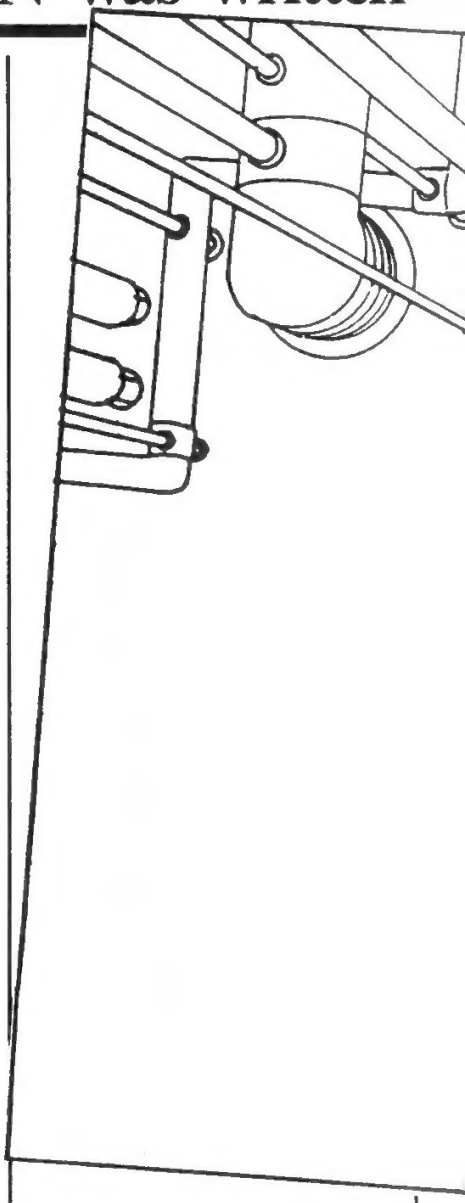
"ELEKTRA LIVES AGAIN was written



FRANK MILLER

His voice hasn't been exactly silent, but there has been a curious lack of new comics projects from Frank Miller of late. The reason for that is that he's been busy working, and the good news is that very soon he'll be back making headlines with some new and different comics — as well as his first movie. Jeff Gelb met with Frank over dinner and got the whole scoop . . .

JEFF: *So, what we see when this material starts coming out will be a different facet of what you want to talk about?*

FRANK: It's very different than the stuff that I did last. ELEKTRA is by far and away the darkest of the bunch.

JEFF: *This is the book that you wrote and drew. What would you call Lynn's contribution? It's not just colorist.*

FRANK: I know, it's a tough one to name. I've called it painting, I've called it color art — it's tough to find a label.

JEFF: *When did you complete your drawing for the book? This was awhile ago, wasn't it?*

FRANK: Oh, months and months ago, yeah — about a year ago. And again, that was a book that got rethought and rethought and rethought and I threw out half the pages I had produced.

JEFF: *But that one became darker?*

FRANK: It just became truer to what Elektra . . . the great thing about Elektra is that I don't have to tell her anything, I just put her in the story and she runs away with it.

JEFF: *Is this a one-shot?*

FRANK: It's a graphic novel, it's going to be about 80 pages long.

JEFF: *When is that due out?*

FRANK: It's not scheduled yet. That's really up to Marvel — once we turn it in to them, that is. You know, there's all the stages of separation and design, and there's some rewriting I want to do now. It's so great to have a book in your hands and actually have the time to touch it up in just those little places it needs. In all

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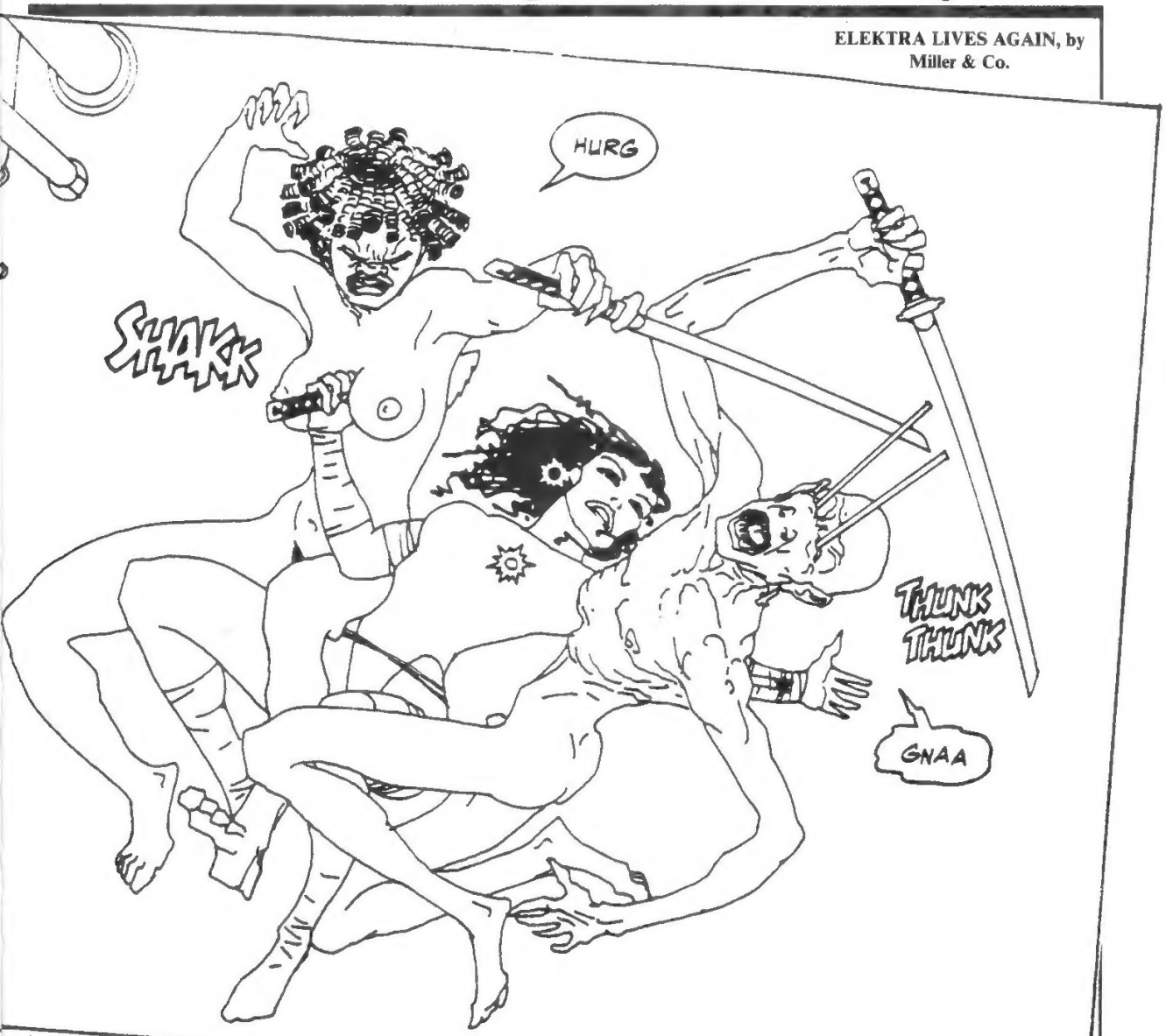
and drawn across a period of several years."



ELEKTRA LIVES AGAIN, by Miller & Co.

fairness, I must say that Epic Comics, particularly **Margaret Clark**, the editor of the book, has been very patient through endless delays that were almost entirely my fault. It's true that there were foul-ups on the publisher's end — graphic novels in America are at a pretty confused stage, and Margaret came in late in the process on this one to straighten it out — but the holdups in producing ELEKTRA LIVES AGAIN were mostly due to my creative struggle in preparing it. It was written and drawn across a period of several years, during which my thinking about my work underwent radical change . . . I started it fresh from my first stint on DAREDEVIL — and am completing the last bits of it having lived through RONIN, DARK KNIGHT, ELEKTRA: ASSASSIN, and ROBOCOP 2. It's been quite a journey. ELEKTRA LIVES AGAIN has gone through many changes, all of which, I believe, has made it a better and truer piece of work than the one I conceived while still a member of the Marvel Comics stable. Less mired in Marvel Comics convention — and more a story that lets Elektra be as lethal and ultimately doomed a figure as she is.

JEFF: *So, for those who need that side of you, that'll be the book this year that they should look for.*

FRANK: Well, I don't know, it's not like DARK KNIGHT. It's scary. I think it's kind of sexy.

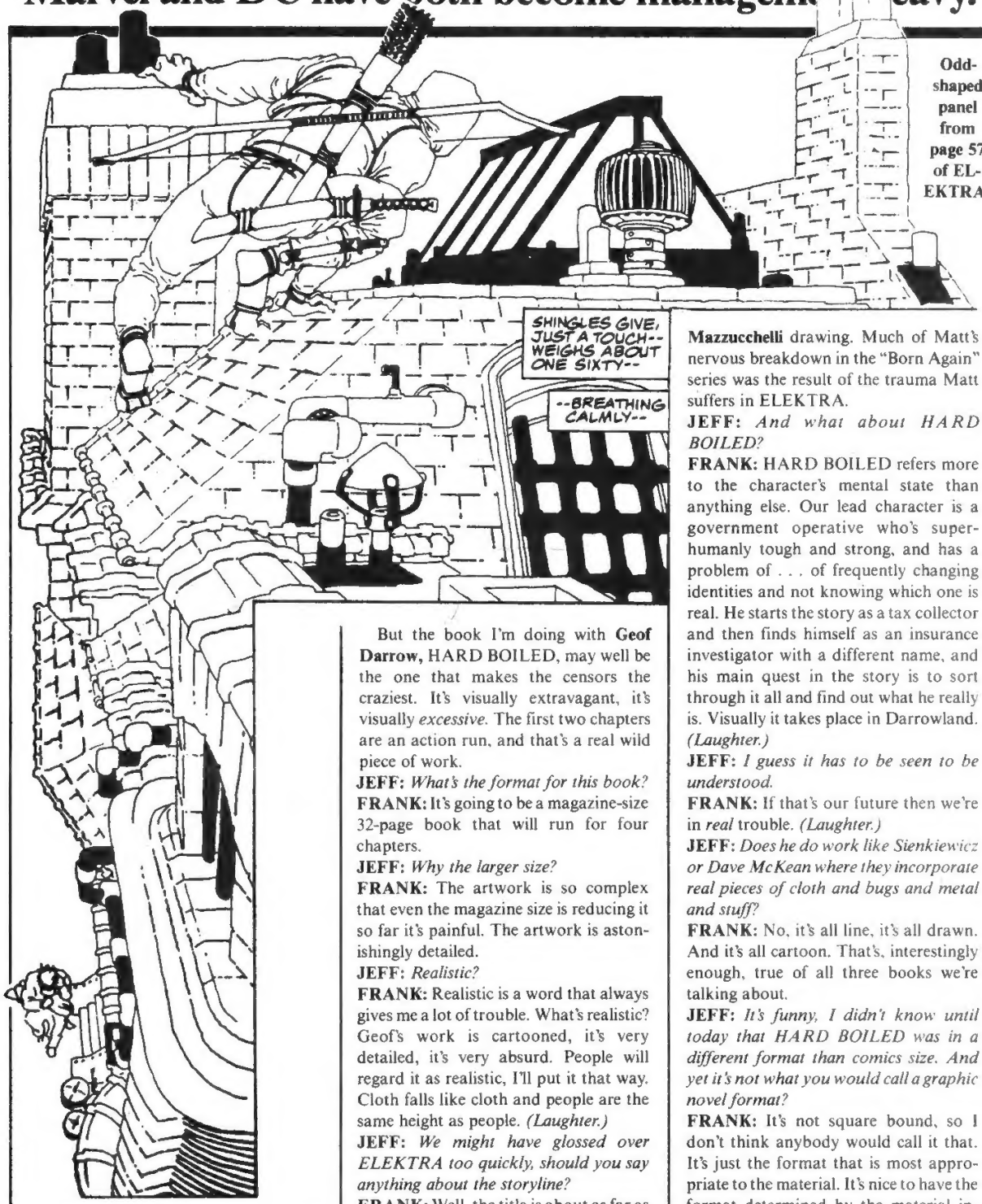
JEFF: *How much does it have to do with the ELEKTRA mini-series that you did before?*

FRANK: About halfway through drawing the ELEKTRA graphic novel I wrote the entire ELEKTRA: ASSASSIN series, so Elektra had eight issues to tell me *more* things about herself.

JEFF: *I didn't realize you had been working on this that long.*

FRANK: Oh, yes, it's been . . . I abandoned it frequently as it became very difficult to work on. It was worth it, though. But as far as how "dark" it is, it's hard for me to tell. "Dark". . . I hate that

"Marvel and DC have both become managemen[illegible]eavy."



Odd-shaped panel from page 57 of ELEKTRA.

term. As far as I can tell a comic book is called "dark" if it doesn't conform to the sweetness-and-light perfect world of the Comics Code. I mean, come *on.* Fantasy always has a source, and the real world from which fantasies are created is not right now a paradise. Every time I think I do something *cheerful,* people call it dark. *(Laughter.)*

But the book I'm doing with **Geof Darrow,** HARD BOILED, may well be the one that makes the censors the craziest. It's visually extravagant, it's visually *excessive.* The first two chapters are an action run, and that's a real wild piece of work.

JEFF: *What's the format for this book?*

FRANK: It's going to be a magazine-size 32-page book that will run for four chapters.

JEFF: *Why the larger size?*

FRANK: The artwork is so complex that even the magazine size is reducing it so far it's painful. The artwork is astonishingly detailed.

JEFF: *Realistic?*

FRANK: Realistic is a word that always gives me a lot of trouble. What's realistic? Geof's work is cartooned, it's very detailed, it's very absurd. People will regard it as realistic, I'll put it that way. Cloth falls like cloth and people are the same height as people. *(Laughter.)*

JEFF: *We might have glossed over ELEKTRA too quickly, should you say anything about the storyline?*

FRANK: Well, the title is about as far as I go; it's called ELEKTRA LIVES AGAIN. Matt Murdock is the lead character in the story. He is *haunted* by dreams of her return and increasing evidence that she's coming back, and she does. ELEKTRA LIVES AGAIN takes place following the last issue of DAREDEVIL I drew — "Roulette" was the title — and the first I wrote with **David Mazzucchelli** drawing. Much of Matt's nervous breakdown in the "Born Again" series was the result of the trauma Matt suffers in ELEKTRA.

JEFF: *And what about HARD BOILED?*

FRANK: HARD BOILED refers more to the character's mental state than anything else. Our lead character is a government operative who's superhumanly tough and strong, and has a problem of . . . of frequently changing identities and not knowing which one is real. He starts the story as a tax collector and then finds himself as an insurance investigator with a different name, and his main quest in the story is to sort through it all and find out what he really is. Visually it takes place in Darrowland. *(Laughter.)*

JEFF: *I guess it has to be seen to be understood.*

FRANK: If that's our future then we're in *real* trouble. *(Laughter.)*

JEFF: *Does he do work like Sienkiewicz or Dave McKean where they incorporate real pieces of cloth and bugs and metal and stuff?*

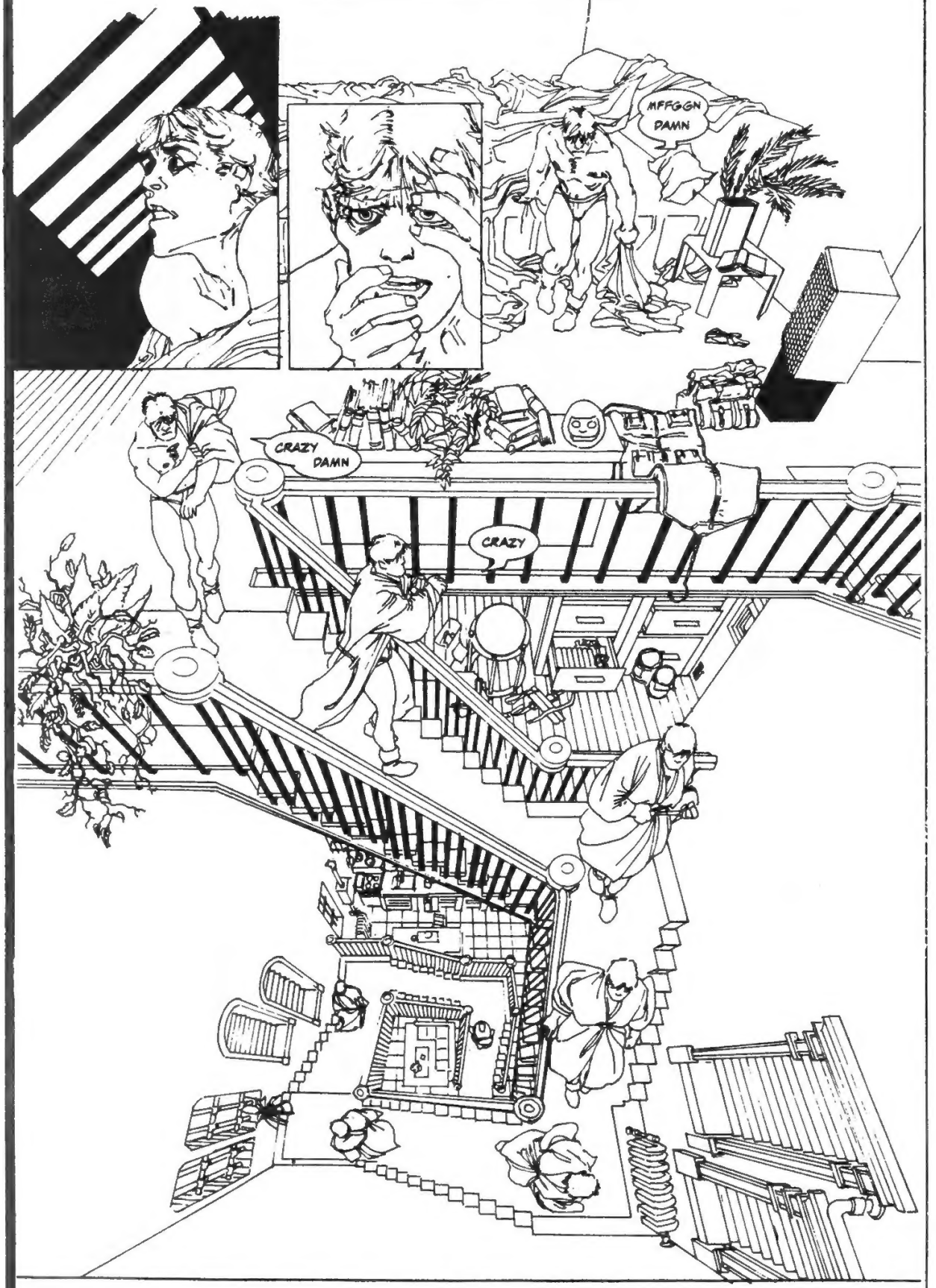
FRANK: No, it's all line, it's all drawn. And it's all cartoon. That's, interestingly enough, true of all three books we're talking about.

JEFF: *It's funny, I didn't know until today that HARD BOILED was in a different format than comics size. And yet it's not what you would call a graphic novel format?*

FRANK: It's not square bound, so I don't think anybody would call it that. It's just the format that is most appropriate to the material. It's nice to have the format determined by the material instead of the reverse.

JEFF: *Well, my assumption is that that's the same reasoning behind what Alan Moore and Bill Sienkiewicz did with BIG NUMBERS, is that they let the material dictate the format.*

FRANK: Yeah, I'm sure it is. I know Bill's having a great time with those square pages.



Beautiful one-pager from ELEKTRA LIVES AGAIN, from Marvel Comics.

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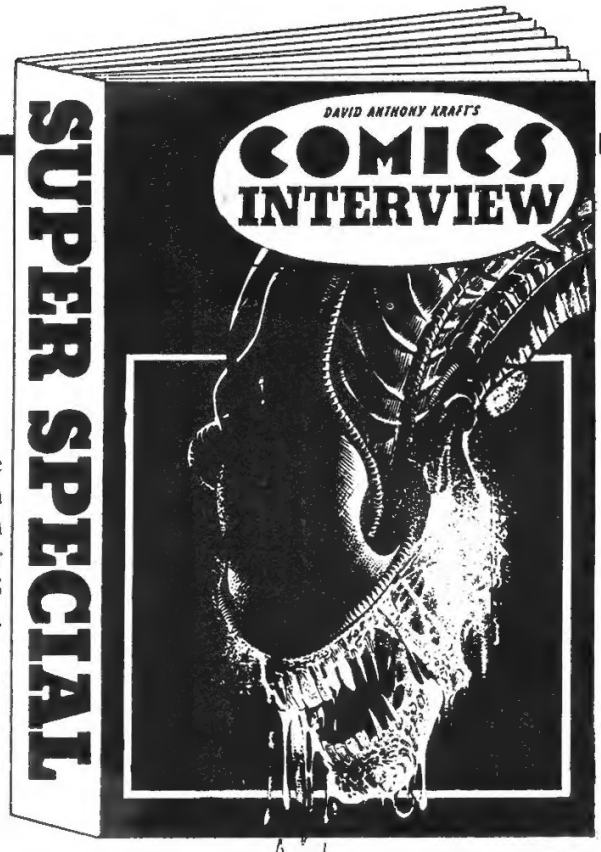

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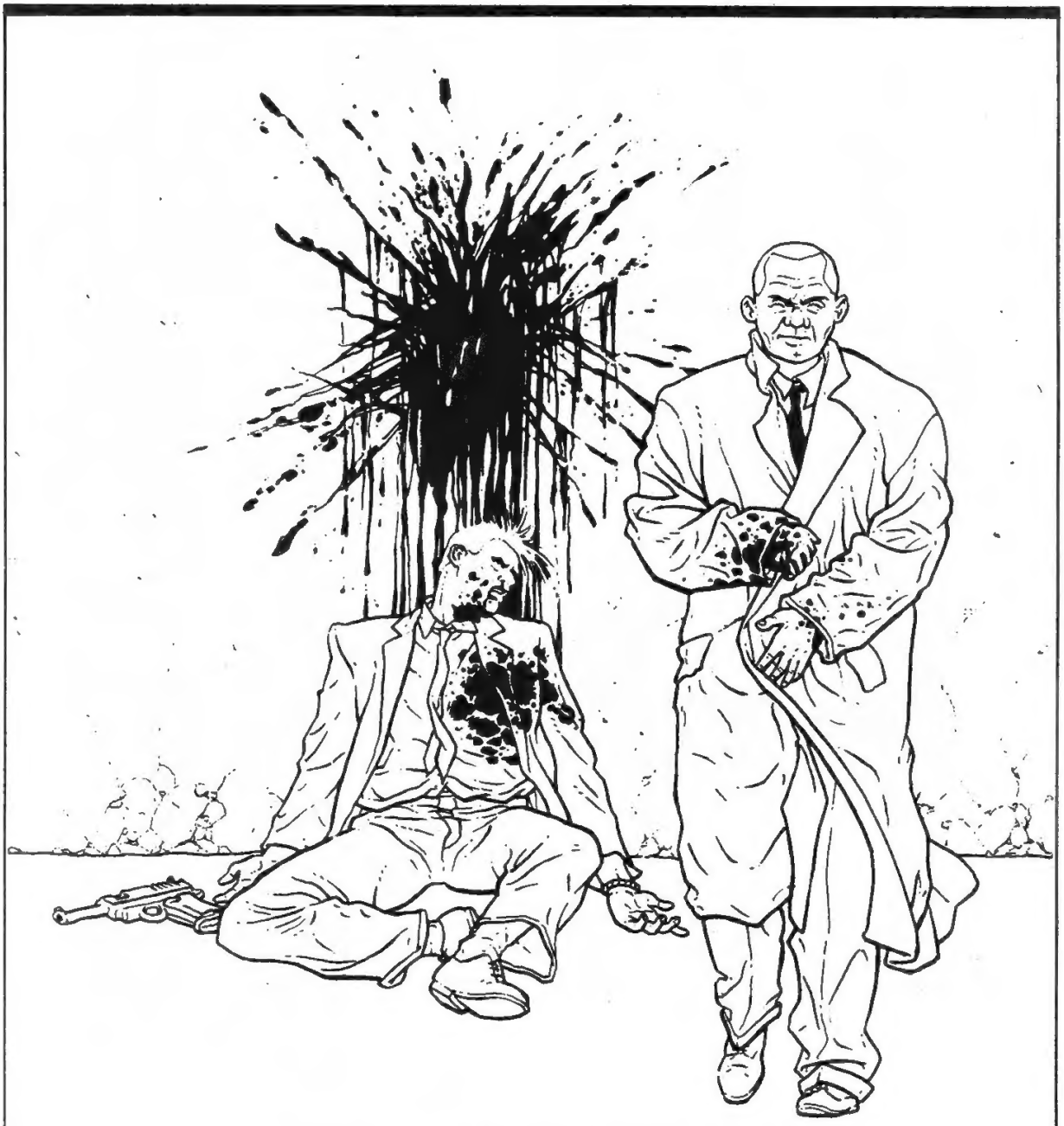

Above & next page: Artwork from Miller's HARD BOILED. Art by Geof Darrow.

JEFF: *Do you think there's some danger, though, in terms of retailers or just people saying they don't know how to store this so they're not going to bother with it or anything like that?*

FRANK: Sure, but I can't think about that end of things — that's what publishers are for. There's always dangers. Everybody was kind of scared when we were putting DARK KNIGHT out that the format would put people off. Now it's become a pretty standard accepted format, in fact the market has been *flooded* with it. I don't know what'll happen with any of the books. I never do.

Geof and I sat down with Dark Horse, **Randy Stradley** and **Mike Richardson,** and talked over a wide variety of ways to treat this material, and settled on that one as one that was appropriate to the form but still with . . . would not ruin the retailers' lives. *(Laughter.)*

JEFF: *Why Dark Horse? Why is this not automatically a DC or Marvel concept?*

FRANK: I thought it would be healthy to take some work somewhere else. I talked it over with Dave and with Geof. We considered publishing it ourselves, then dropped that idea. I was specifically looking for a situation where we could have total autonomy on a book. I have felt that Marvel and DC have both become more management heavy, and knowing from past experience that they are *extremely* prone to succumbing to outside pressure, and knowing that the material in these books was going to offend all the right people, it seemed logical to find a publisher, to make an

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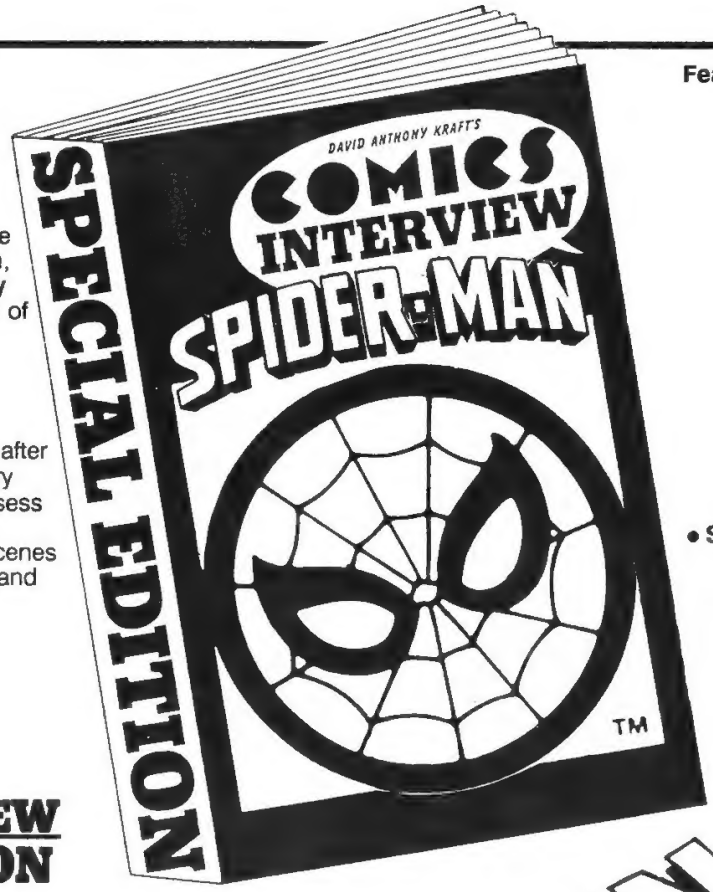

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HARD BOILED

offer to a publisher, who was not bogged down in traditions that were so against the purposes of the project.

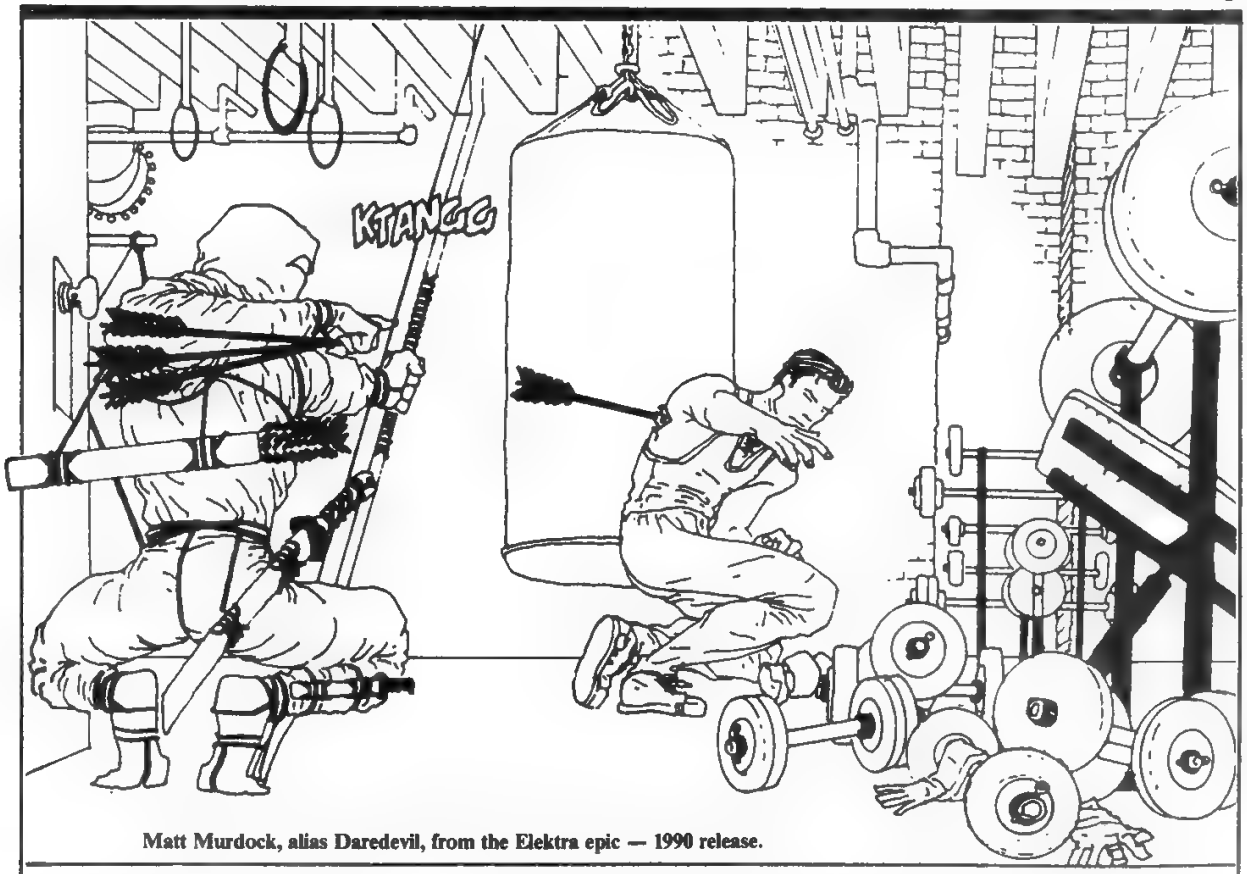
JEFF: *Maybe — I don't want to put words in your mouth so tell me if I'm wrong — but is it also a function of the fact that both companies now are owned by huge conglomerates?*

FRANK: M-hm.

JEFF: *And it's that you can't just please a Jenette Kahn or someone else, you have to be aware that there are guys in positions far beyond her that have to either approve the book or approve the direction or —*

FRANK: You just *always* know there's more variables. They're always hiring more people at the top, Marvel and DC

"The material in these books was certainly



Matt Murdock, alias Daredevil, from the Elektra epic — 1990 release.

right now. All of a sudden we've got this creation called Executive Editors — God knows *what* they do. But having worked in film I've seen having that many people above, the restrictions it imposes, and I just felt that I didn't need so many bosses. And also, when you work for Marvel or DC your work is almost automatically fed into a gristmill for film, for toys, etc. I wanted to leave the options open, and one of the options I wanted to leave open was prohibiting merchandising and licensing from ever happening to a piece of work, depending upon whether it was appropriate or not.

Now, there are arrangements that *could* be made at Marvel and DC *for* that sort of thing, but that would be another point in negotiation. And I didn't see any reason why not to take it to a small publisher that had a world to conquer. They've got a lot of energy — they're producing some good stuff. And coming in I don't have to ask questions about copyright, trademarks, etc., it's all understood.

JEFF: *Does this suggest that it's almost impossible to do a book through one of the two mainstream publishers that aims for something higher?*

FRANK: What this suggests is that this is what Frank and Dave and Geof wanted to do with their books.

There's good and bad with working with the majors. The good, in my case, is that I've got a hero that I fell in love with, Daredevil — I go back to him from time to time and enjoy it thoroughly. And, obviously, there's the advantage of a built-in readership that's going to at least show up to look at the cover. The negatives are, again, there's so many people in charge. And there's this company overview, this continuity *monster* of everything crossing over eighteen different ways. Creatively it's a lot more restrictive. There's also the *worry* that some of the material I'm doing will make some kinds of people very angry, so I want a publisher that believes in what I'm doing, and is willing to defend it.

JEFF: *I guess the point is that you have to go where your material takes you.*

FRANK: One of my books *is* a Marvel book this year, one of my books next year will probably be a Marvel book. I've made some friends of these characters and I'm not saying never again. But right now my main focus is on creating new characters, new heroes.

I've got a lot of ideas about what I think we could do with heroes, ideas that don't need the 50-year burden of comic-book history, don't need all those little details encumbering them.

JEFF: *On the other hand, is there perhaps still one more character that you would like to give your touch to that's within the existing universes?*

FRANK: I don't know, not that I can think of. Nothing leaps to mind. I even got to do Captain America in my DAREDEVIL run, he was the big one that I was hoping to get my hands on.

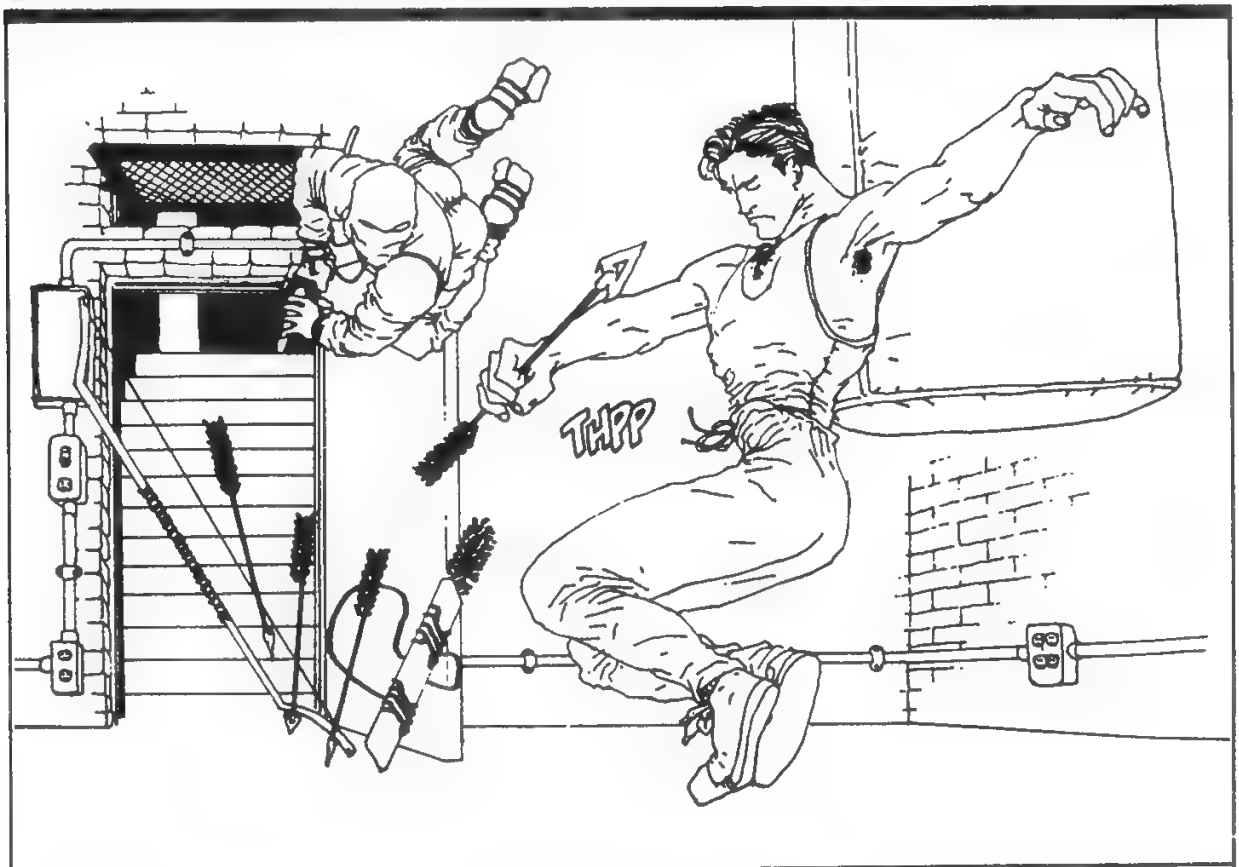
JEFF: *Well, is there a fourth book that you're working on now?*

FRANK: Yeah, it's a DAREDEVIL graphic novel which is a huge, *expansive*, embroidered *origin* story, much like BATMAN: YEAR ONE. It'll be full of surprises. I've done more DAREDEVILs than I've done *anything*, and I was able to go back and take the existing origin and add to it a great deal. A great deal of drama. It's mainly a character story, it's mainly about who Matt Murdock is. It's also a crime story, it includes an appearance of the Kingpin that predates any of the previous appearances of the Kingpin. And **John Romita** is drawing it.

JEFF: *Senior? Junior?*

FRANK: Junior. **John S. Romita** I think

going to offend all the right people."



he goes by now. And the stuff is gorgeous.

JEFF: *How far along is that?*

FRANK: Oh, he's well into the pencil stage. For me it's a real work of love because Matt's just somebody I know — that's all there is to it.

JEFF: *Almost like someone you could call up on the telephone.*

FRANK: I remember, the first time I left DAREDEVIL I thought, "I'll never do *that* again." And I've bounced back a couple of times.

JEFF: *Now, is there anything left unsaid about Batman that you would come back and say? Have you ever, like, woken up in the night and thought, "Why didn't I do that?"*

FRANK: Oh, yeah. Are you kidding, I plotted a sequel to DARK KNIGHT. But I won't do it. Batman isn't like Matt. Matt's someone with a full range of human emotion who manages to be a hero in spite of himself. Batman is a Wagnerian character to my mind — it's *bigger* than the rest of us, he's a *giant*, but with a single theme.

And after having done his last case and his first, I kind of feel like I got it off my chest. I certainly satisfied that six-year-old in me who fell in love with Batman. Also, I don't know how much anybody . . . the BATMAN material they are producing at DC right now doesn't indicate to me that there'd be as much freedom for a personal point of view on the character.

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MARTHA, YOU'VE BARELY TOUCHED YOUR DINNER NOW YOU KNOW THAT TURKEY'S JUST AS GOOD AS I D COOKED IT MYSELF...
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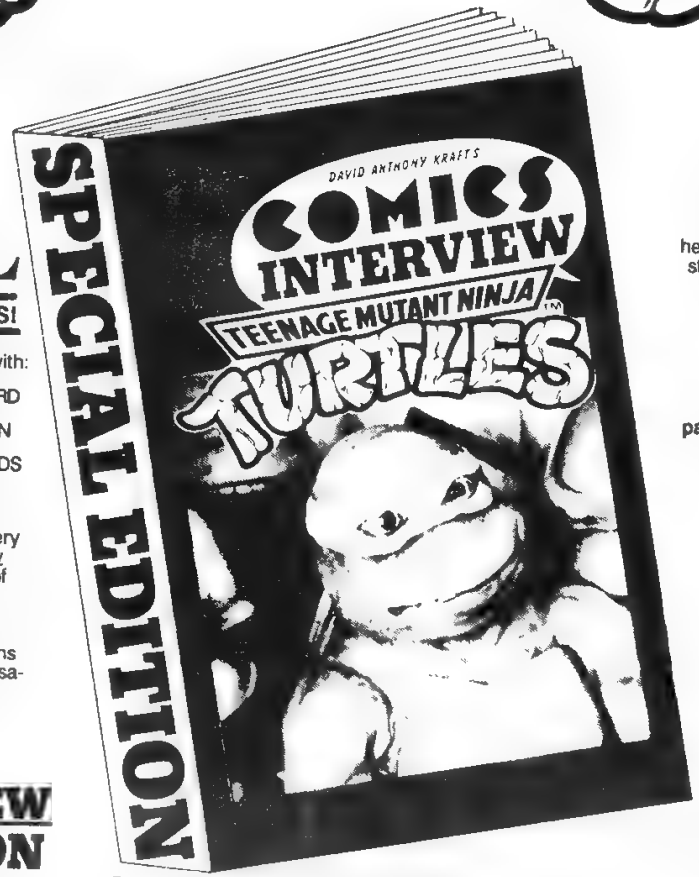

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"With DARK KNIGHT I realized I couldn't kill Batman."

Elektra at work/play. From Miller/Marvel's ELEKTRA LIVES AGAIN.

JEFF: *Have you kept in touch with the stuff since DARK KNIGHT?*

FRANK: I've seen it from time to time.

JEFF: *Any reaction to ARKHAM ASYLUM, for example?*

FRANK: Not really, no reaction.

JEFF: *Is that essentially why you would shy away from following up on your own proposed sequel to DARK KNIGHT?*

FRANK: Well, there's a couple of reasons. DARK KIGHT is a very *contained* piece of work, and *I'm* very happy with its resolution, where it leaves Batman in the story. To come back and do it again, it feels to me, would not be the most challenging thing I've ever done. And in a way it would be exploiting DARK KNIGHT. There's enough of that going on already.

JEFF: *Yeah, it would be an enormous challenge to make a sequel stand up by itself.*

FRANK: It's not as free-form and open-ended as all my DAREDEVIL work is. Whenever I finish a story, I've got the next chapter in mind. I try to end stories as early as possible *with* a sense of possibility. With DARK KNIGHT I was very determined — because I'd gone through every scenario including him dying at the end, and then I realized I couldn't kill *Batman.* Nobody would believe it.

JEFF: *Was that more than a fifteen-minute soul-searching conversation?*

FRANK: It was a while there.

JEFF: *Did you talk to DC about that?*

FRANK: Yeah. I talked to **Dick Giordano** about it *long* before I ever started — this was back at the earliest stages of jotting down notes. Dick was open to just about anything. He liked the kind of death I had proposed, a bit of a BUTCH CASSIDY AND THE SUNDANCE KID death where you'd see him just before the last moment. But as I was working on it, as Batman was surging through my veins — *(Laughter.)* I realized that trying to kill Batman was futile — he's a folk hero. Daredevil could die in a story, but Batman's too big for that.

And . . . I wanted to leave Batman looking forward to his next adventure. I wanted to leave him with that. There is a *joy* to that character. He's not just a brooding, pouting, glum, depressed vigilante. He *likes* what he does.

JEFF: *Well, let me go backwards with you for a second because I never got to ask you any questions when those books came out. What was your thought about the fact that it actually broke through barriers, that that series went beyond comics as far as it did? Did you expect it to? Did you ever think you were doing more than just a good comic book there?*

FRANK: It *wasn't* more than just a good comic book. It was good fortune that it got so much attention. It was good timing, it was a character that people knew — and the best way to make everybody notice that comic books had changed was to show them one of the *icons* in more contemporary and less compromised terms. *(Waiter takes plates.)*

JEFF: *Was that one of your goals?*

FRANK: I told myself when I started out that I was going to do the great American superhero story, that I was going to take one of these old myths and make the character as old as the myth and just play it out and see where it went. No, I wasn't picturing articles in ROLLING STONE or coverage on the AP wire. When that came, though, it had to be taken for what it was. DARK KNIGHT was in the right place at the right time to *get* the attention that was kind of earned by *generations* of craftsmen. It was earned by **Bob Kane, Dick Sprang, Jerry Robinson, Neal Adams,** and also by **Jack Kirby.**

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"Daredevil could die in a story. Batman's too big for that."

There is a wealth of work there that the public is unaware of because it's been so censored that it's *sterile* largely, and because comics have branded themselves as pallid crap for little kids. It was not — and I don't mean to sound self-effacing because I do think it's a good piece of work, — but it was a well *placed* piece of work with a very familiar hero. It could have been Superman that did it; it was Batman instead because Batman probably more accurately mirrors our times.

JEFF: *True. I did an interview with Bob Kane before the BATMAN film, it was in COMICS INTERVIEW, and asked him what he thought of DARK KNIGHT. He said he was very happy it was a success but he didn't understand it.*

FRANK: *(Laughter.)*

JEFF: *And I asked him if the two of you had ever spoken —*

FRANK: No, we've never met. I'd like to meet him sometime.

JEFF: *I think you should. It was funny, he started asking me questions about what some of the symbolism meant, but I'm not inside your head, I couldn't answer for you.*

FRANK: Well, it was *his* work, and **Bill Finger's** and **Dick Sprang's** and **Jerry Robinson's,** that I was drawing most directly. It was, in a lot of ways, turning the clock back and moving it forward at the same time. I just wanted to make him *big* again.

JEFF: *Well, you did that and then some. So, now as you get on with your own work, I can see where it's obviously a lot more satisfying for you to take projects on that are all yours.*

FRANK: M-hm.

JEFF: *I notice that they're all self contained.*

FRANK: Yes.

JEFF: *Do you have any interest in doing a continuing character or series again?*

FRANK: Well, sure, but . . . after GIVE ME LIBERTY, if Dave's up for it, I'd love to do another one. The reason I like the contained series is the idea doesn't get a chance to be worn out. You do it, you carry it through, you end it, and then if you have *another* movement this character can go through, or another adventure, or another *perspective* on the character, you can do it.

I think the monthly pulps, just by the structure of that monthly schedule, *everything* gets dried up. Then they start renumbering them and doing whole stories over again. My involvement with Batman was short-term, I'd *hate* to be regurgitating old BATMAN stories — or old DAREDEVIL stories.

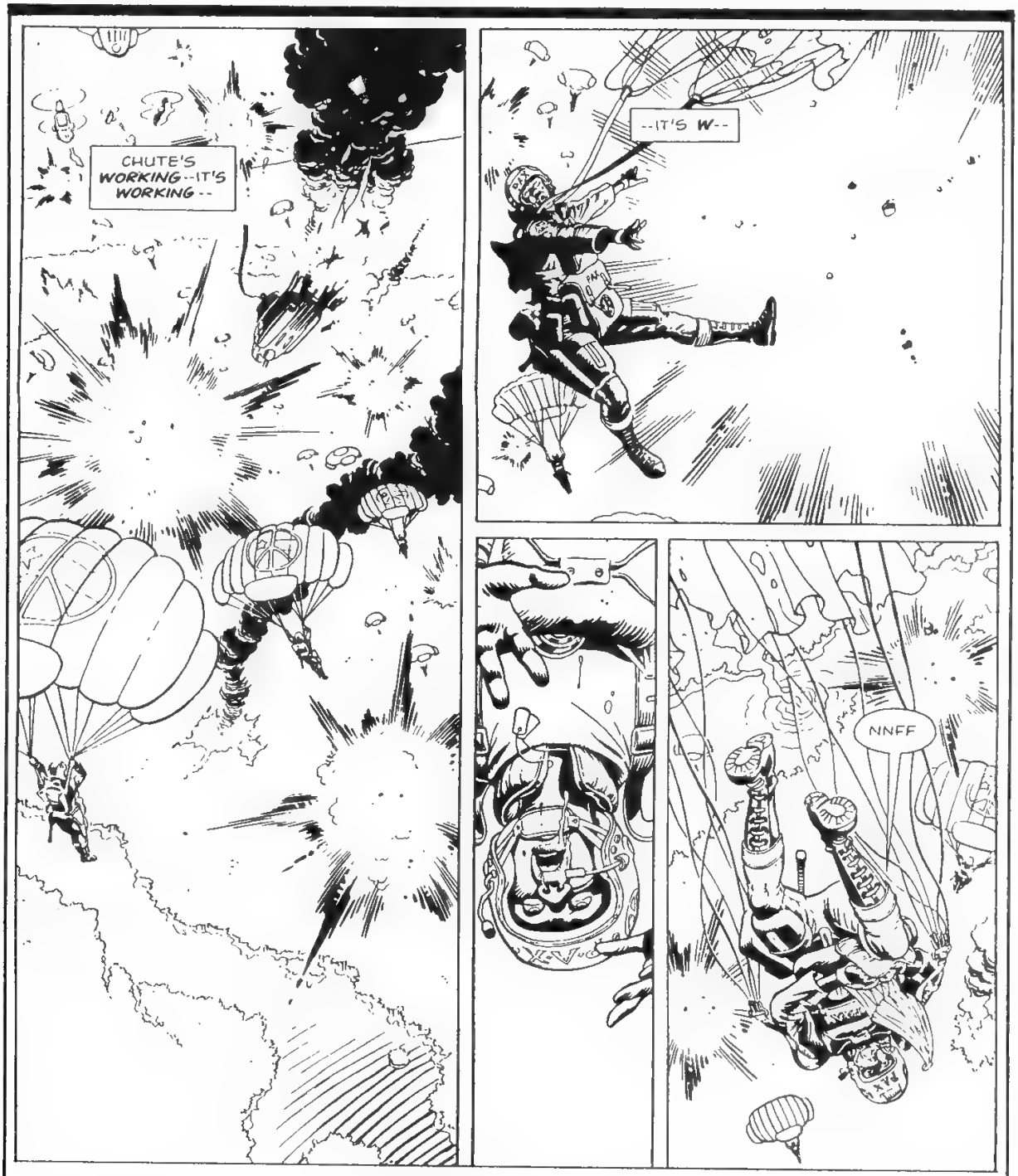
JEFF: *And actually, while we're on that topic, should we assume that once these books start coming out that there will be a confined period of time in which they actually all will come out?*

FRANK: Yes.

JEFF: *Well, you know, comics readers get a little paranoid after several years when nothing has come out on time.*

FRANK: Yes — and the assumption is that delays are always the fault of the talent. Sometimes, as with ELEKTRA LIVES AGAIN, this is true. But many, many other times, it isn't. Publishers are anything but infallible. For instance, DC Comics delivered the bluelines for DARK KNIGHT #1 many weeks later than scheduled, though the black-and-white artwork had been delivered on time. They just sat in a desk, I'm told, while Lynn waited, while I called and called. I told them that this would cause delays because Lynn was doing much more than a traditional coloring job. I told them exactly how late the work would be, how unworkable they'd made the monthly schedule. They stonewalled me, and the series came out exactly as I predicted it. This sort of thing happens

"Dave and Geof have been delightful to work with."



From GIVE ME LIBERTY, by Miller & Gibbons.

much more frequently than publishers would like you to think.

JEFF: *But in this case, I'm assuming, you have a lot more say over when the books actually start coming out, so you know the schedule will be able to be maintained.*

FRANK: Dave and Geof and I are in collaboration with the Dark Horse, and they have been delightful to work with. The books will probably alternate months, that's the plan right now — LIBERTY will come out in June, I believe, HARD BOILED in July, then LIBERTY, then HARD BOILED, and so on.

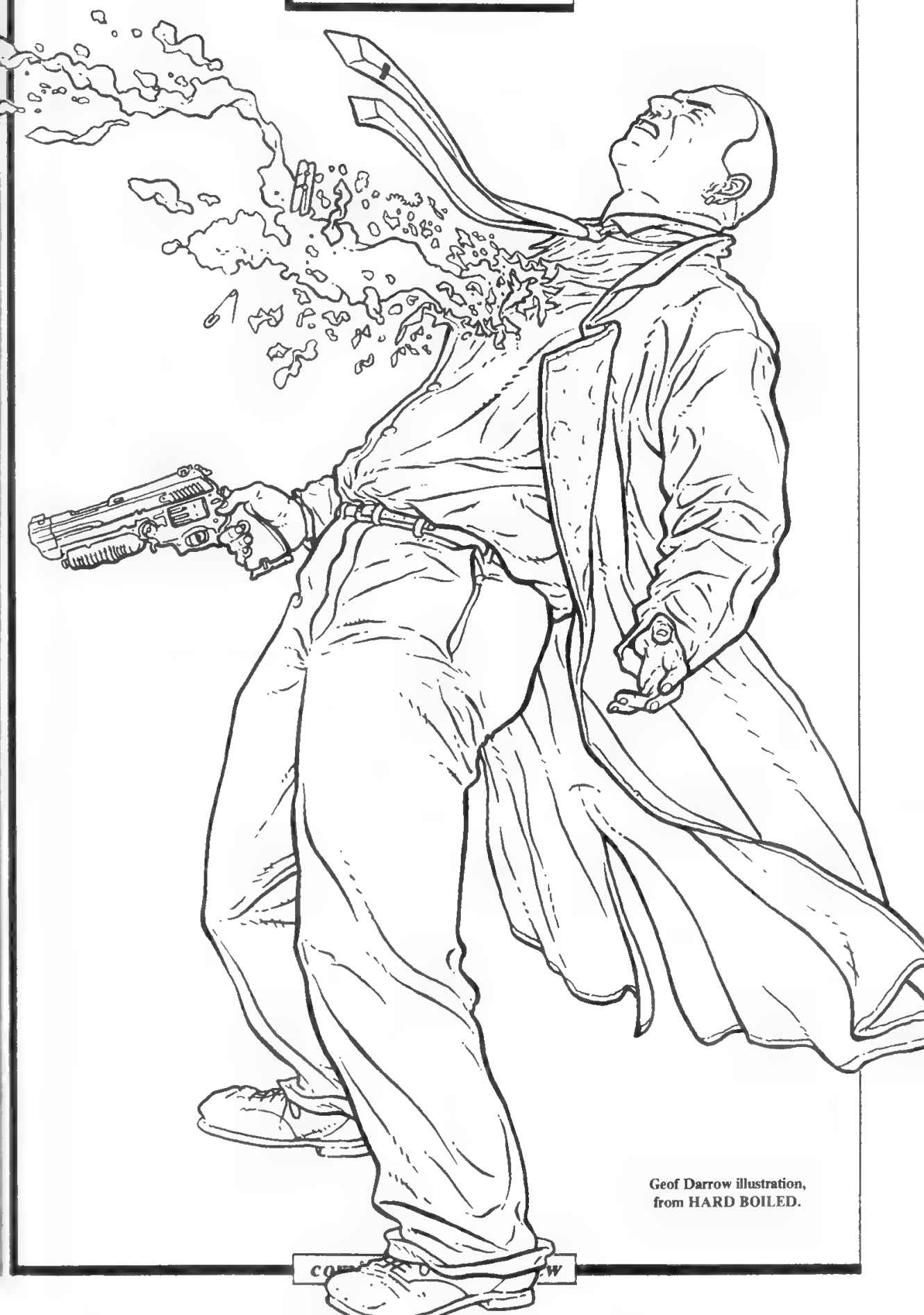
JEFF: *This is a strange question, but of the two of those books do you have a sense of which one will actually be more popular?*

FRANK: I try not to ever think that way.

JEFF: *I don't blame you.*

FRANK: Right, it's insane. I find that planning for popularity is a real fast way to turn out garbage. *(Laughter.)*

JEFF: *Let's get back to your thoughts about a continuing series. You obviously*



Geof Darrow illustration,
from HARD BOILED.

"I can't read DAREDEVIL, I can't read

have a lot of ideas in your head, would you have any interest, for example, in creating a lexicon for characters that other people could develop?

FRANK: No, no. I work from character out, the plot follows the character. The idea of making them up and then thrusting them on somebody else would make me crazy. That's why I can't read characters after I've finished working on them. I can't read DAREDEVIL, I can't read BATMAN, I'm just going to hate every word of it because I didn't *do* it. I'm totally obsessive that way. I get *locked* on my own version of things and I can't accept anybody else's.

JEFF: *And it's impossible for any two versions to be the same.*

FRANK: Right, yes.

JEFF: *I can see that, but I'm thinking of something like AMERICAN FLAGG or JON SABLE where Chaykin and Grell created those books and then moved on and they were picked up by others. You don't see that as a possibility?*

FRANK: Absolutely not. What I can offer in my work is my sincerity and my intent, whether it's right or wrong. The *last* thing I would want to do is to feed ideas into the same gristmill that's been taking the life out of comics for 50 years.

This, again, is a problem with the monthly schedule. I understand the economic reasons for it, but you see characters go through exciting periods and then as much as 20 years they'll slump, to the point where it becomes common wisdom that this character is a loser. It's like the drunk on your corner who just won't go *away*. I would rather see these characters go away for awhile. I would rather not see Captain America or whoever for ten years until someone has really *got* something that's really good to do with him.

JEFF: *Yeah, but the market dictates otherwise. And the one thing that I have noticed the older I get, and I suppose the more cynical I get, or the more businesslike that I get, is that most of these books don't appear to exist for much other than merchandising reasons.*

FRANK: But then somebody gets all hot and bothered over a character and you've got something wonderful happening. Whoever thought SWAMP THING would go through such a revival? That's where exciting comics happen.

JEFF: *And actually, you know, if you didn't have to feed that monthly machine you wouldn't necessarily have something like that happen.*

FRANK: M-hm. When the news stories came out about DARK KNIGHT some of them stated that DC Comics had started publishing BATMAN again. *(Laughter.)* I just feel that I would rather read occasionally a really sincere effort on the character than pick it up on the off chance.

JEFF: *Do you read any comics on a regular basis?*

FRANK: Yeah. I read YUMMY FUR every time it comes out, I like that a lot.

JEFF: *So do I, but how do you define why?* (Laughter.)

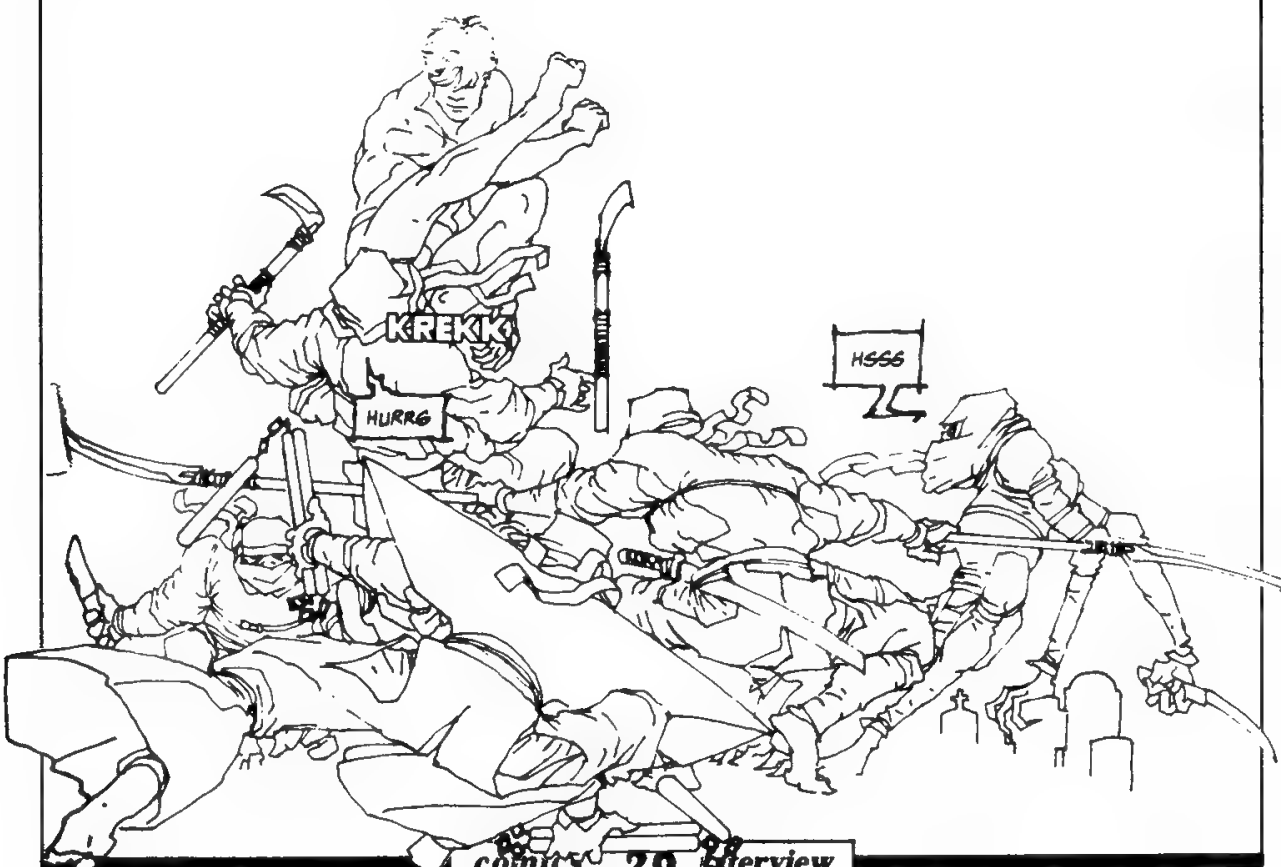
FRANK: I can't. It's definitely the most personal thing out there.

JEFF: *What else do you read?*

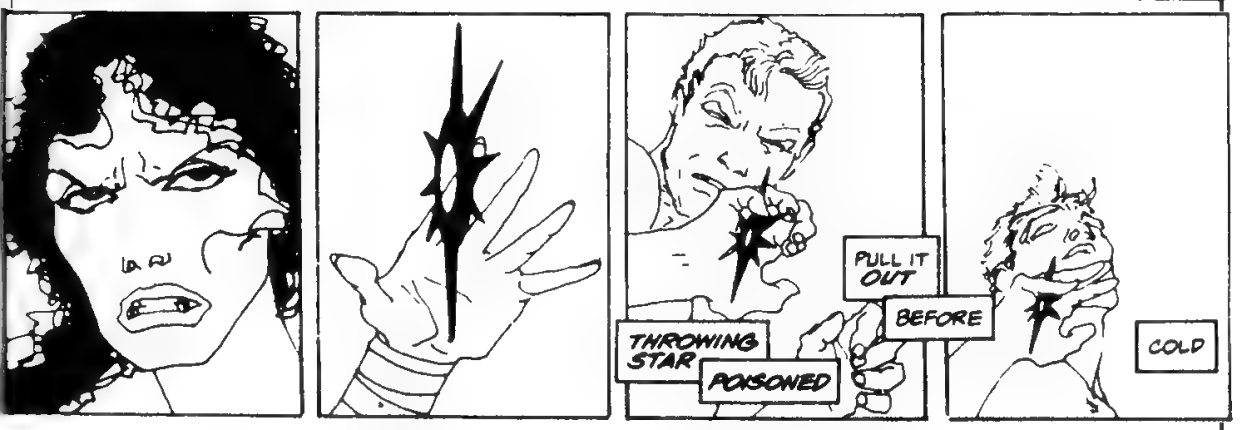
FRANK: I read RAW and CEREBUS and LONE WOLF AND CUB and TABOO, A1 . . . let's see . . . I'll probably think of some others after we leave here.

JEFF: *You aim toward more personal books, books with an intensely personal vision?*

FRANK: Yeah. Whenever I get a chance to r ad a good superhero story, I *love* it. I really love it. You see, I don't mind mainstream at all as long as it's really heroic and really exciting. That's *always* what I aim for with DAREDEVIL. It's



BATMAN, I'm going to hate every word."



Above, below and previous page: More ELEKTRA LIVES AGAIN.

straightforward adventure stuff with, I think, a really good lead character and good villains.

JEFF: *Here's a thought — would you have any interest in doing a ROBOCOP graphic novel?*

FRANK: Are you kidding, it's been two years.

JEFF: *You've never once had the itch to draw that character, though?*

FRANK: Oh, I drew him in my first presentation piece, it's going to make the cover of this COMICS INTERVIEW.

JEFF: *But that's it?*

FRANK: Yeah. He's a *movie* character. He's *wonderful* as a movie character. Translating him into a comic book, it just seems to me, would remove the best values the character has, how he sounds, what he sees. He'd just be a less empowered Iron Man.

JEFF: *Well, let's see, what are we forgetting here? Is there another project keeping you busy right now?*

FRANK: No, that's it for the present — everything else is just in that hazy area of development where I'm playing around with ideas.

JEFF: *It sounds to me like we're going to see a fair amount of your work in the next six to eight months, maybe more, all in a real burst. But then are you going to go away again? Do you sense more of a continuity of your involvement in comics from here on?*

FRANK: I can't predict it. A year from now I could be doing absolutely nothing but comics, or I could not be doing comics for the next five years.

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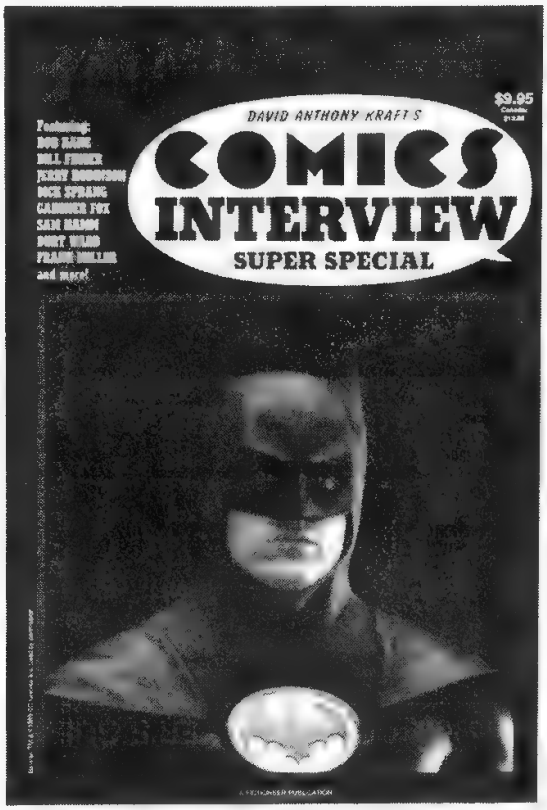

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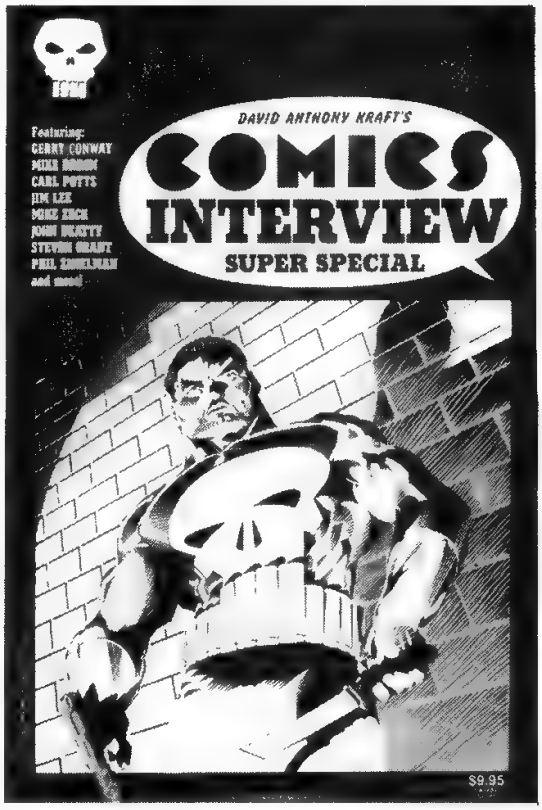

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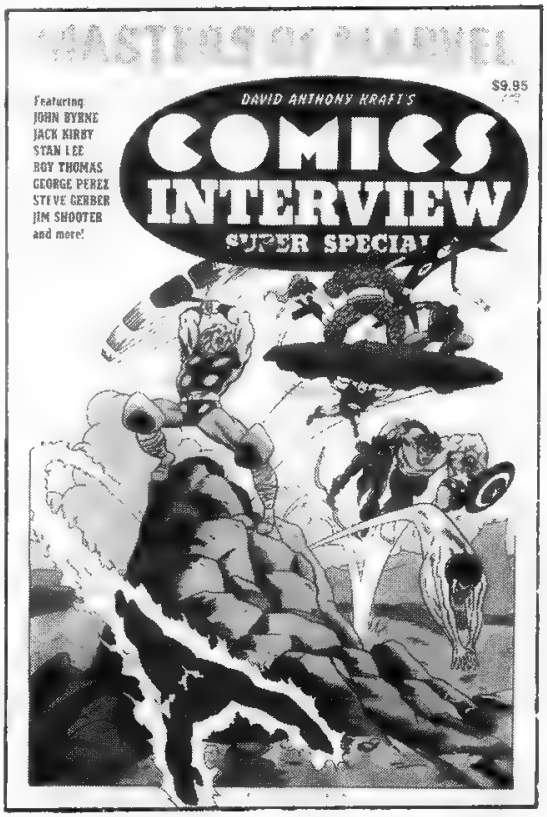

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"I decided to do ELEKTRA in mixed

BILL SIENKIEWICZ

A funny thing happened on the way to the intro. Dwight Jon Zimmerman always rattles one off on tape either before doing an interview or afterwards. Well, this time he did it before, but he neglected to take the leader on his tape into account. All that survived of whatever it was he said is, "...ELEKTRA and the direction that his art has been taking."

Pretty darn intriguing, I grant you, but hardly what we'd call an introduction. But, hey, I'm not griping! This is my big chance to step out of my anonymity a little and say important things about one of comicdom's big names, Bill Sienkiewicz — which not only is unpronounceable but hard to type — to escape the drudgery of transcription for a moment, to maybe toss a razz at those guys who always conduct interviews in the nearest available wind tunnel.

But what can I say about Bill Sienkiewicz that he won't take exception to? I mean, the guy literally hates being talked about in terms of superficial classification. If I try to go in deep I'll most likely just antagonize him. So what can I say about him?

Creditwise, he did MOON KNIGHT and NEW MUTANTS and he is doing the Elektra limited series and the Daredevil graphic novel — but not the Elektra graphic novel. Is he a genius or a loon? Or both or neither? Does he sleep in the nude? Well, that last one you maybe won't get answered — unless you can somehow interpolate it from what follows... — Darrel Boatz

DWIGHT JON ZIMMERMAN: *You're doing the Elektra mini-series in a different style from what you did in NEW MUTANTS. Why the change?*

BILL SIENKIEWICZ: *(Clears throat.)* Well, part of it is sin p the medium I'm working in. I'm in color, and comics are mostly done in pen and ink, obviously. There are very few mainstream comics that are done in charcoal or anything else. When you get into color there are so many mediums· there's Dr. Martin's dyes, there's oil, there's acrylics, and there's also what I'm doing in ELEKTRA, — that is, working in cut paper...

DWIGHT: *Mixed medium?*

BILL: Yeah. Completely mixed mdeia. I decided to do ELEKTRA in color that way. Not blueline. Completely colored originals. Full color comics was a whole new field to me even though I had done the paintings before, like the JEDI covers and this paperback or that poster or whatever. I'd done paintings, primarily for myself, as well. When the opportunity came up to do a painted interior like the graphic novel that I'm doing with Frank the DAREDEVIL graphic novel — it sort of threw me into a sink-or-swim situation — basically I *put* myself there. I felt I would get better by working under pressure; so I basically set up some walls for myself to push against and see how I did against them. The first was really a tough one to get done, because I was so emotionally wrapped up with the story. I walked around the city for hours at a time going, "My God, what'd I get myself into?" One hundred, two hundred paintings an issue? I like strong, singular

VITAL STATISTICS

Name: Bill Sienkiewicz
Born: 3 May 1958 — Blakely, PA
Most Often Asked Convention Question: How do you pronounce your name?
Answer: "Bill"
Most Often Asked Convention Request: Please pronounce last name.
Strongest Comic-Book Memory: When I stopped reading DCs because I saw an issue of FANTASTIC FOUR starring the Inhumans by Jack Kirby. There was something so different that just grabbed me by the throat.
Favorite Clothes Designer: Girbaud

media . . . cut paper . . . original paintings."

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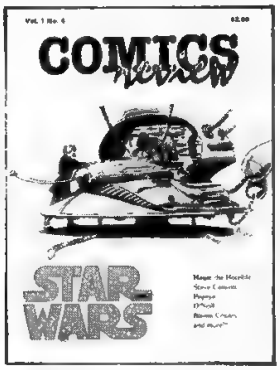

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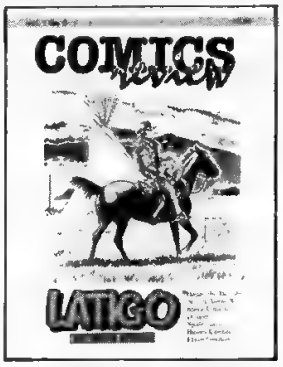

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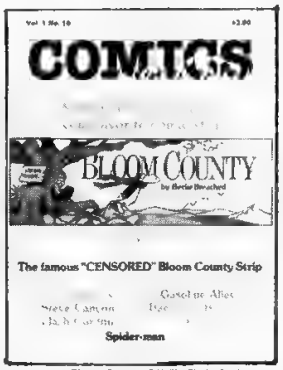

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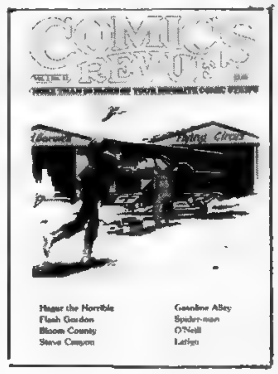

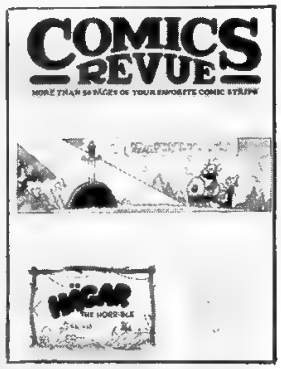

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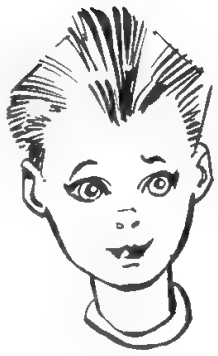
"When to shout and when to whisper."

images to get an idea across, and to break it up into panels was difficult. That ripped me in different directions — and I felt I couldn't give everything to the one single image that I wanted to. So I walked around the city for hours at a time, looking at things, taking photos, and just absorbing as much as I could, sort of gearing myself up to go to the studio — when I had the



studio in Manhattan next door to **Walt Simonson**. **Denys Cowan** was sharing a studio with me at the time and I can recall what it was like for the two of us. I mean, at that time, Denys was really busting his ass getting seriously into his work, trying to grasp certain abstract ideas about drawing and inking. Growing pains. Painful stuff. Rewarding stuff. Stuff that just improved his work incredibly. I mean, Denys always had tremendous ability, and was struggling like hell to apply it. And doing it. And so here's Denys going through all his tough shit and I come in like a disenfranchised loony toon and we'd kick in some **Robert Plant** tapes or **Doors** tapes and just attack the pages. I'd come in, it was late in the afternoon, and sit down and for three hours, four hours, to work, and it was as if I had been through a trial by fire, and I'd shake myself off and go home. That's how I worked on this color stuff. The floodgates would open and I would give birth to this finished page. It took all day to gear up to it, and I'd explode and scream and it would be done. And basically, to answer your question, color stuff really came about simply because there's a completely different psychology to color. It's simply more than just getting the fleshtones right. It has an impact, a psychological impact; so I basically went in and I wanted to do everything — I mean everything. I was so insecure about it all — I wanted to prove that I could do it.

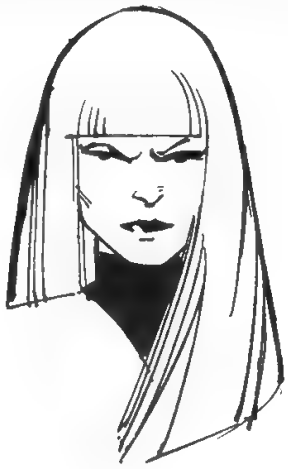
DWIGHT: *Prove it to yourself?*

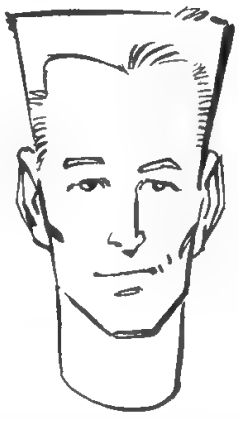
BILL: Yeah, to myself, that I could do it. And part of what art is is the essence, the quintessential essence, distillation; it's knowing as much what to leave out as what to put in. Well, I tried to figure out one way to do certain things, "Okay, I want to do it *this* way," and I'd vacillate and I'd want to do it this other way — and so I found out the way to do it was to do it all different ways but have each way that I did it have a definite reason for *being* that way. Rather than getting angry at myself and saying "What's wrong with me that I can't make up my mind?" Looking at it in the sense that the glass is half full as opposed to half empty. That it's a *plus* that I work in so many ways. Versatility.

DWIGHT: *Let me see if I understand you here. You're saying that you have all of these different ways of expressing yourself in color that you were fighting to figure out, so that you were almost fitting each different style to a different scene; like saying a bathroom scene would work with the colored paper while the park scene would work well in pastel chalk.*

BILL: Right.

DWIGHT: *Following on that — did you find yourself looking at what other illustrators in comics were doing, like for instance John Jay Muth in MOONSHADOW, to kind of get a hint at how styles you were doing might reproduce?*





BILL: Well, in a way. I mean, I was looking at Jay's stuff, but that's so singularly MOONSHADOW. Jay's style is very lyrical, and I think that there may have been

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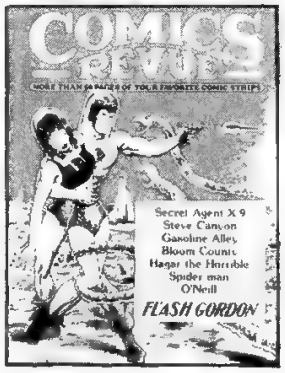
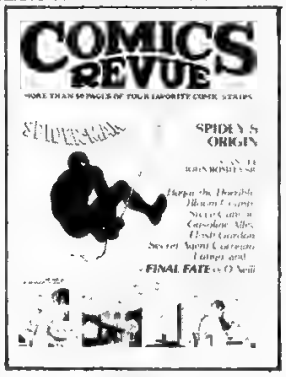
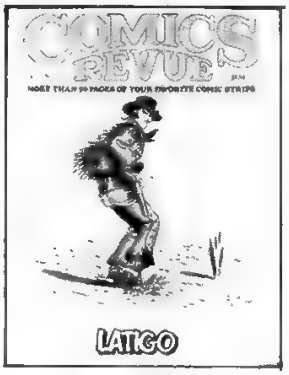




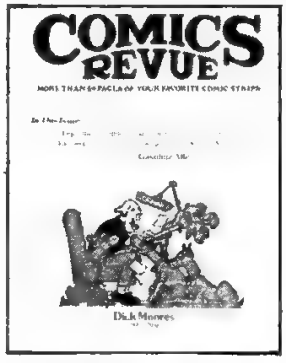
#14 The Amazing Spider-Man, Bloom County, Steve Canyon, Gasoline Alley, O'Neill, Flash Gordon, Hagar the Horrible, Secret Agent Corrigan, Latigo

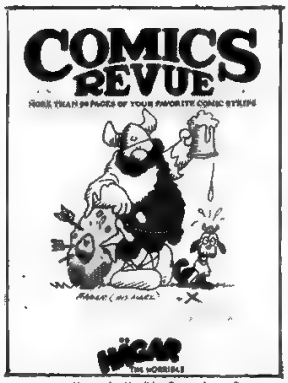
#15 Latigo, Secret Agent Corrigan, Bloom County, The Amazing Spider-Man, Hagar the Horrible, Flash Gordon, Gasoline Alley, Steve Canyon



#16 Gasoline Alley, The Amazing Spider-Man, Bloom County, Flash Gordon, Steve Canyon, Hagar the Horrible, Latigo, Secret Agent Corrigan

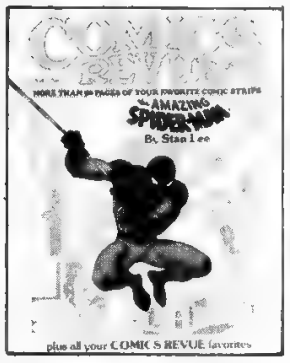
#17 Gasoline Alley, Flash Gordon, Hagar the Horrible, Secret Agent Corrigan, Latigo, The Amazing Spider-Man, Bloom County, Steve Canyon





#18 Hagar the Horrible, Secret Agent Corrigan, Blondie, Steve Canyon, Bloom County, The Amazing Spider-Man, Gasoline Alley, Flash Gordon

#19 The Amazing Spider-Man, Bloom County, Secret Agent Corrigan, Latigo, Steve Canyon, Flash Gordon, Hagar the Horrible, Gasoline Alley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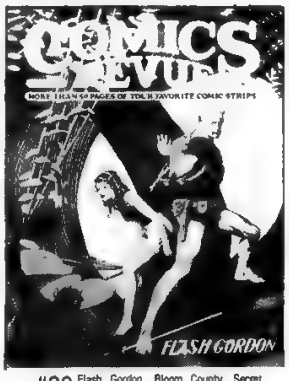

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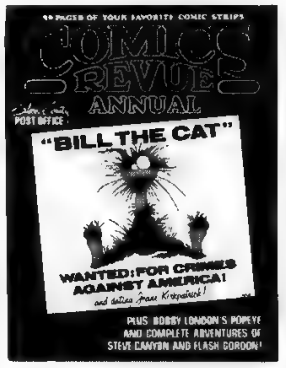
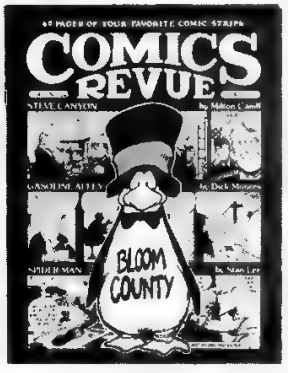
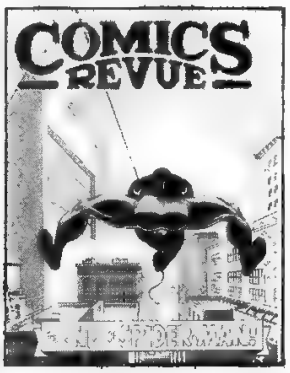
#21 Steve Canyon, Hagar the Horrible, Latigo, Secret Agent Corrigan, Bloom County, The Amazing Spider-Man, Gasoline Alley



Annual 1 Bloom County, Steve Canyon, Popeye, Secret Agent Corrigan, Latigo, Flash Gordon, Hagar the Horrible, The Amazing Spider-Man, Gasoline Alley

#22 Bloom County, Secret Agent Corrigan, The Amazing Spider-Man, Hagar the Horrible, Steve Canyon, Flash Gordon, Gasoline Alley





#23 The Amazing Spider-Man, Bloom County, Secret Agent Corrigan, Latigo, Steve Canyon, Hagar the Horrible, Flash Gordon, Gasoline Alley

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"My God, what did I get myself into?"

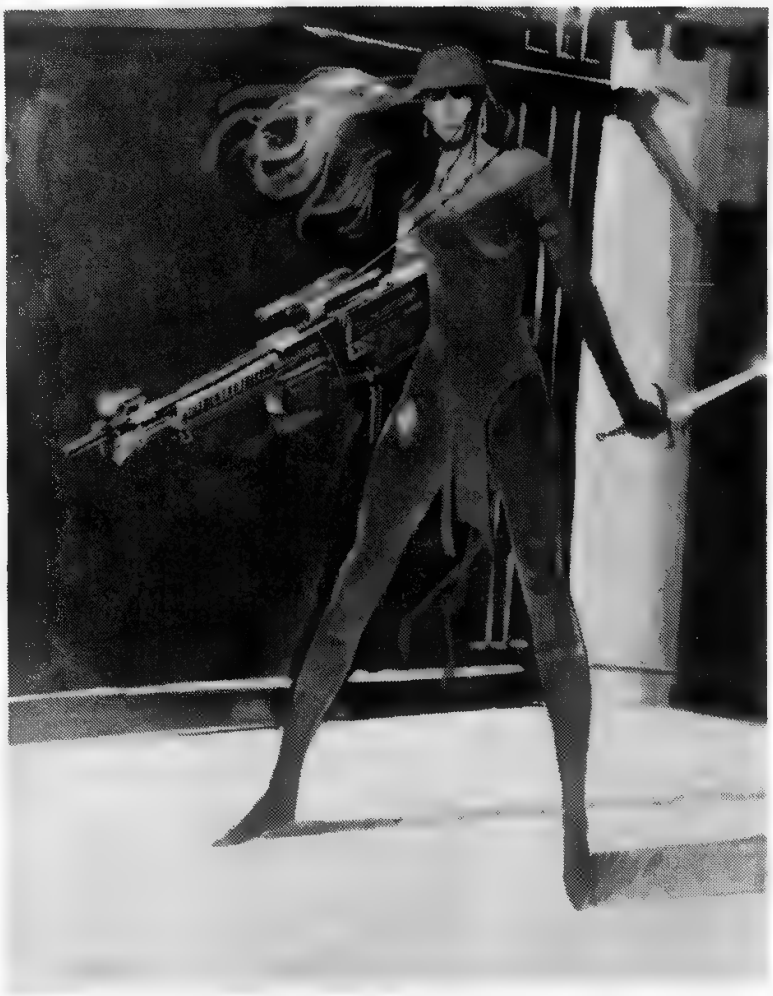
some aspects of what Jay was doing that I liked, that I might want to incorporate, but it was basically a completely different temperature. It was more frenetic. I felt like if you had a dial with a needle on it it would just be jumping back and forth like a nuclear tennis match. It was trying to finally figure out how to do things. I went from being in control, with black-and-white work, to putting myself into the fire from the frying pan. It was straddling two Brahma bulls, basically, with a paintbrush in my mouth, saying, "Okay now, ride!" I didn't want to throw myself into a high pressure situation and petrify myself into non-productivity — which I think is what it started out as — but just to gain mastery and control of the medium.

DWIGHT: *How do you compare the stories that you're doing now to that first one? Have you achieved that control?*

BILL: Yes and no. I've achieved a little bit more control. I'm much more sure of myself in terms of what color can do. I also really feel that the first one was definitely *a la prima*, of the moment. It couldn't have been done any other way. Frank and I were discussing the possibility of doing ELEKTRA as sort of a project to work on to bring in a little bit of bread-and-butter money while I was working on the graphic novel, which was taking up all of my time. I'm just finishing it up and it's taken me about a year to do it.

DWIGHT: *This is the DAREDEVIL graphic novel?*

BILL: The DAREDEVIL graphic novel. I also had to learn to earn a living in that time, and basically I started to find out that when Frank and I get together, that neither of us does anything half-assed; and so these sparks were shooting across the 3,000 miles of phone lines — after he moved — of incredible intensity. ELEKTRA was a product of that, and I think it's a really strong piece of work for both of us. The issues that we're working on now are not at all what we thought they would be — they've taken on their own life. ELEKTRA is probably the most organic series I think I've worked on. Nothing I've ever worked on comes close. I still feel like there's so many possibilities and avenues to go up. The hardest thing to do when you realize you have so many options is to pick one and do it. What eventually happens with me, anyway, is that I don't feel the plus of picking that one way to do it. I feel the loss of having left the other ones behind, so I'll have to do *those* next time. It becomes a furnace — I just want to keep going in and doing stuff; like I'll do the next page *this* way — and so what was once fear is now excitement. "This page is done, I'm gonna get to the next one!" And the stories we're doing reflect that. It's turned from pretty psychological heavy-duty stuff into some pretty rip-roaring kick-ass high adventure.



"ELEKTRA's turned from pretty psychological heavy-duty stuff into rip-roaring high adventure."

DWIGHT: *Since you're using all of these different meduims of color, isn't there a kind of fear that the overall impression's going to be more chaotic, like there'll be less of a unity?*

BILL: That's something that I think was actually desirable in the first issue. That's a lot of what the first issue is like. The second issue doesn't have that. The third issue has a different quality — it's a little more eclectic but in a different way. I think the adrenaline surge after the first two issues sort of settled in. And also that was when I was doing the bulk of the graphic novel, so I was working on ELEKTRA a little more sporadically. And the fourth issue is starting to shape up as a unit again, 'cause I'm done with the graphic novel.

DWIGHT: *Since ELEKTRA is being done through Epic, what difference have you noticed in being able to tell the story?*

BILL: *(Pause.)* I was going to say anything goes, and it is anything goes within what I consider to be reason. I think in a way it's a perfect vehicle. NEW MUTANTS was probably *not* the vehicle to go any further with that kind of experimentation. ELEKTRA seems to be. But what oddly enough is happening is, the first one was very off-the-wall, the second one was a little less so. What's happening is that the story is taking strong priority — where we're not trying to do crazy, wacky things just for their own sake. We're trying to really do things that will service the story and the characterization. If I feel like going off the deep end in terms of technique and the like, that's fine; but I feel, ultimately, there has to be a ballpark, or a game that's being played, in order for you to hit a home run. So when I do that kind of stuff I feel there

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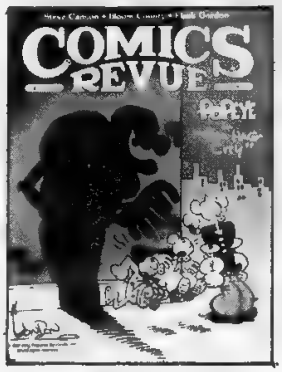
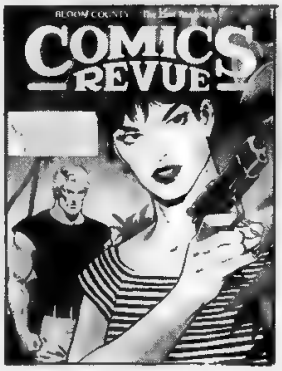


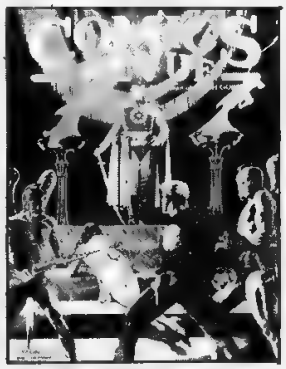
#25 Secret Agent Corrigan, Popeye, Latigo, Bloom County, Flash Gordon, Steve Canyon, Gasoline Alley

#26 Modesty Blaise, Bloom County, Latigo, Popeye, Steve Canyon, Hagar the Horrible, Flash Gordon, Gasoline Alley



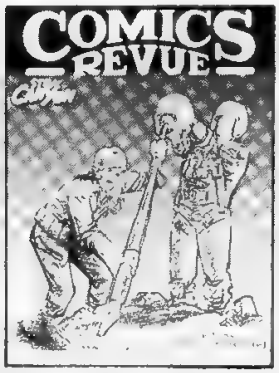
#27 The Phantom, Bloom County Modesty Blaise, Hagar the Horrible, Flash Gordon, Popeye, Steve Canyon, Gasoline Alley

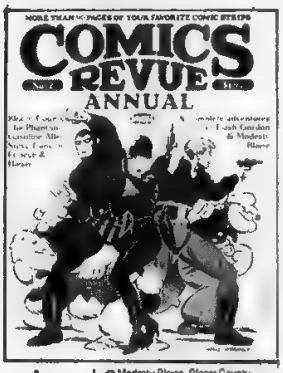
#28 Bloom County, Modesty Blaise, Hagar the Horrible, Steve Canyon, The Phantom, Popeye Flash Gordon Gasoline Alley



#29 Flash Gordon, Bloom County, The Phantom, Hagar the Horrible Modesty Blaise, Popeye Gasoline Alley

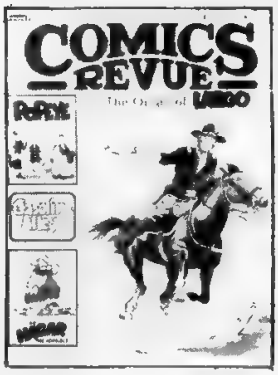
#30 Milton Caniff Memorial Issue Steve Canyon





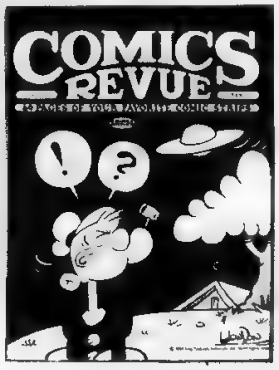
Annual 2 Modesty Blaise, Bloom County, The Phantom, Hagar the Horrible, Steve Canyon, Popeye, Flash Gordon, Gasoline Alley

#31 Latigo, Bloom County, The Phantom, Hagar the Horrible, Steve Canyon, Flash Gordon, Popeye, Modesty Blaise, Gasoline Alley



#32 Bloom County, The Phantom, Popeye, Latigo, Flash Gordon, Hagar the Horrible, Modesty Blaise, Steve Canyon, Gasoline Alley

#33 Popeye, Modesty Blaise, Flash Gordon, Bloom County, Steve Canyon Hagar the Horrible, The Phantom, Gasoline Alley



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"Elektra's not like Mary Tyler Moore."

has to be a reason for it. That's a sign of a bit more maturity on my part. I'm getting things under control, knowing when to shout and when to whisper, when to hit the airbrush and when to go and use line. The first issue of ELEKTRA, as much as I thrashed around, was like learning to jet-ski and falling down a lot. After awhile I didn't mind falling, because it was only water that I was hitting at umpteen many miles an hour *(laughter)*, and I started to not mind falling down so much 'cause I realized that in the act of falling I was learning balance. Keeping that attitude is really the thing that's helped me the most with the project. It's also helped my jet-skiing.

DWIGHT: *On ELEKTRA, how much of it is Frank Miller's vision and how much of it is yours?*

BILL: Well, Frank definitely — I mean, it was his character, basically, so he has a definite idea of where he wants to go. What I'm bringing to it, are strong conceptual visuals to bounce off Frank. We'll have plot conferences and certain things that I'll do in the visuals will spark an idea. The one character that I did, named Perry, achieved a more prominent role in the book because of the way that he was drawn. He didn't become just a minor character. It's a game of mumblety-peg where I respond to Frank's words and throw back bizarre artwork at him, different reactions that I have, things that I want to show, for example: The reconstruction scene of Garrett in issue#3, taking S.H.I.E.L.D. and turning it into an arcane, industrialized, bureaucratic machine that doesn't work. Basically, Garrett has been blown up and he's being reconstructed at S.H.I.E.L.D. They're sewing him back together, literally, with a giant sewing machine, and they've got him standing up in this weird position, and he's partly wearing his clothes, and they've got drill bits going into him and everything. It's not at all comfortable. I think it's partly influenced be my real liking for **David Lynch**'s ERASERHEAD and anything that gutsy. Having those kinds of things done with the art and then Frank goes back in and says, "Let's try this..." — and so we bounce back and forth.

DWIGHT: *Initially, were you afraid, since Elektra was Frank's creation and he is also an artist, that he might somehow restrict you?*

BILL: *(Pause.)* One of the things that I've done, to some people's chagrin or whatever, is that there's a certain cockiness that I have...when I come onto a book I try to make it fun for me, make it interesting for me to do. When I took on NEW MUTANTS I really hadn't followed what **Bob McLeod** or **Sal Buscema** had done, had no great desire or demand to do it that way. And so when I took on ELEKTRA I thought, "Okay, what's Elektra to me?" I mean, Frank's going to take care of that aspect partly in the writing, but basically I had to make ELEKTRA work visually for me, and I struggled with it because I partly took what Frank had done and tried to make it work for me. The mutants, as well, I felt that they were not visually unique. They were widgets. They all looked the same to me. And so I just moved them apart and tried to make them unique — each with their own distinctive appearance. With Elektra I thought of making her almost unattractive, like a Greek sculpture which was very idealized for the time it was done but by today's standards is not soft at all. I thought of giving her a **George Washington** kind of nose, the Romanesque nose. But, it came down to the fact that this is a book that's about a lot of unattractive

people — let's just see what Elektra looks like as a really beautiful enigma. Let's give her a little bit of unique beauty, because in some panels she's very attractive and in other panels I think she's not.

DWIGHT: *Will her visual depiction change during the course of the series?*

BILL: It has already. She's more of a barometer of what the other characters are doing. She's very much active; but it's not like THE MARY TYLER MOORE SHOW where **Mary Tyler Moore** was sort of like the recipient of all of the bonzo-gonzo stuff going on around her. Elektra very much has a hand in it.

DWIGHT: *She distances herself?*

BILL: She stays pretty consistent for each issue, but there is a growth from issue to issue in her visual. I think that one thing about the four issues that I've worked on so far — I can't speak for the next four — what makes this project so intriguing is that from one issue to the next I'm learning so

"ELEKTRA is really a punk book. New

much, and my art has taken so many jumps in knowledge that it's like, "Where did that come from?" So it definitely is jumping all over the place — but yet in some weird way it's all making perfect sense. I couldn't have tried to have that work out that way, it just seems to be falling together that way.

DWIGHT: *With Frank Miller and Chris Claremont you've now worked with two people who have perhaps made the most impact on comics in recent memory, at least from the creative standpoint. How do you compare working with them?*

BILL: *(Pause.) I...*

WAITER: Can I get either of you a beer or something?

BILL: I'll have a little more lemon. I think you'll have more coffee?

DWIGHT: *Yeah.*

WAITER: Okay.

BILL: Let's see: how can I compare working with both of them? First, I want to say working with both of them was and is terriffic. Working with Chris on NEW MUTANTS...I'd been doing a group book, basically, in MOON KNIGHT; but it was such a dark, moody book that I wanted to do something a little lighter — and so I came on the mutants and at first it started out fairly grim, and then later on it really turned into a punk book — and ELEKTRA is very much a new wave book. It's really a punk book. It's counterculture. Editorial. Very political.

Chris's writing is very much about emotions and rites of passage. Chris writes about people's emotions and how they talk about their feelings; whereas Frank can do characters, write dialog, extremely well — but he also is making a comment politically with his work. Frank's work has a point. A premise. And also I think ELEKTRA is a lot more of a comment, perhaps, on Frank's and my state of mind regarding the business world with the "cant's" and the "cannots" and the "have-tos" and the "shoulds" and the bureaucratic gobbledygook. There's a subversive quality to what we're doing.

DWIGHT: *So Frank is dealing with themes and using the people in the story as expressions of those themes?*

BILL: Yeah. I think that both of us are together on that point. We didn't really set out to do that. It just sort of happened. And I think what Chris does is very much soap opera, where the more things change, the more they stay the same. People eat that stuff up! I think he deals also with themes and issues but his *forte* is emotions — and people emoting about emoting — so that sometimes it feels...distant somehow — but it works — especially the Mutants — those traumas of the first date, of a zit on the end of your nose, those kind of things. Also here are kids that have those kinds of feelings and yet they're gifted and...it's...

DWIGHT: *They're special but they're just like you.*

BILL: Yeah, but because they have a power it's like they have to save the universe, but they miss the prom. There are things that Chris has written that are some of the most poignant stuff I've ever read. Chris, when he's really on I feel like — I don't know what this is gonna sound like — but Chris really works up to, works at the level of his art, of the art he gets. That's an observation. And I feel that when I really have been "on" and I've given him something that I've been very happy with — inspired by what he's given me — what he comes back with is so powerful. Like the bear issues. And I feel that I'm working that way with Frank now. So, I have to say that working with, really, two top talents, it's like anything else — it's an interaction — a collaboration so the more I give the more I get, and the more the project ultimately gets as well. It's really nice to feel that kind of strength and comradery and to bounce things back and forth that way.

DWIGHT: *Jim Steranko was a writer-artist. Walt Simonson and Frank Miller are writer-artists. Will we soon be seeing dual credit under Bill Sienkiewicz's name?*

BILL: Yes. The "Slow Dancer" job that I did for EPIC was sort of the first story that I had written professionally. Part of my trepidation about getting started is that I partly feel that I am not, as much as I've made my mark doing superhero stuff, I don't feel that that's the kind of stuff I really want to write — and there's been this "yeah-but" going on inside my head. "Well, I want to do this but it's not superheroes." I actually really love **Orwellian** kind of heavy industrialized images. And I like oppression themes in stories and...

WAITER: Here you go!

DWIGHT: *Thank you.*

BILL: ...the things that are sort of obtuse. It's not so much what the story's doing, like literally in terms of a linear "a-b-c-d and these are the characters." It's what is being implied in the vehicle of the artwork and in the story. It's the nightmare, to a certain extent, and you look at it and you realize that there's something going on here, and it's almost like the parts sort of pull the whole sum of it into another world. It's a political cartoon where you have im-

wave. It's counterculture. Very political."

ages that represent something else. Like in ERASERHEAD, I think the baby, that kind of turtlesque thing wrapped in a sack, is a phallic symbol — and I think a lot of the stuff that **Lynch** does deal with the very anxiety provoking things, like meeting your girlfriend's family — real life flesh-and-blood things that are suppose to be the norm, and he imbues them with idiosynchartic subtext, and so turns that scene into the emotional equivalent of what we really feel. The unease, etc. **Woody Allen** would have hit you over the head with it in another way. **Lynch** just lets you sweat it out. A lot of directors are into quick cutting, and are into maybe holding onto a scene a second longer. What **David Lynch** did in ERASERHEAD was to break down that barrier — he did it with sound and he did it with timing — and he just destroyed that comfort zone. That is what I really strongly admire, and that is what I feel is the art of it, and that's the kind of feeling I'd like to get across in my work — is that there is something, a subtext that's going on that's more than the linear. ERASERHEAD does that admirably. My girlfriend was watching it the other night and she got visibly upset and said, "This is weird. This is absolutely weird." I said, "Do you want to stop watching it?" and she said, "Absolutely not!" What I find really interesting about it is the repulsion-attraction force is so powerful in that film — and that's partly what I really want to work on with my story and art. I tend to be a very obsessive person, compulsive-obsessive, and I think my work is going to reflect that. When I do more of this I feel that I'm really going to be just jumping into it with both feet.

DWIGHT: *I'm getting the impression that you think highly of ERASERHEAD.* (Laughter.)

BILL: Oh yeah, I love it. I also love **Chuck Jones** and **Tex Avery**.

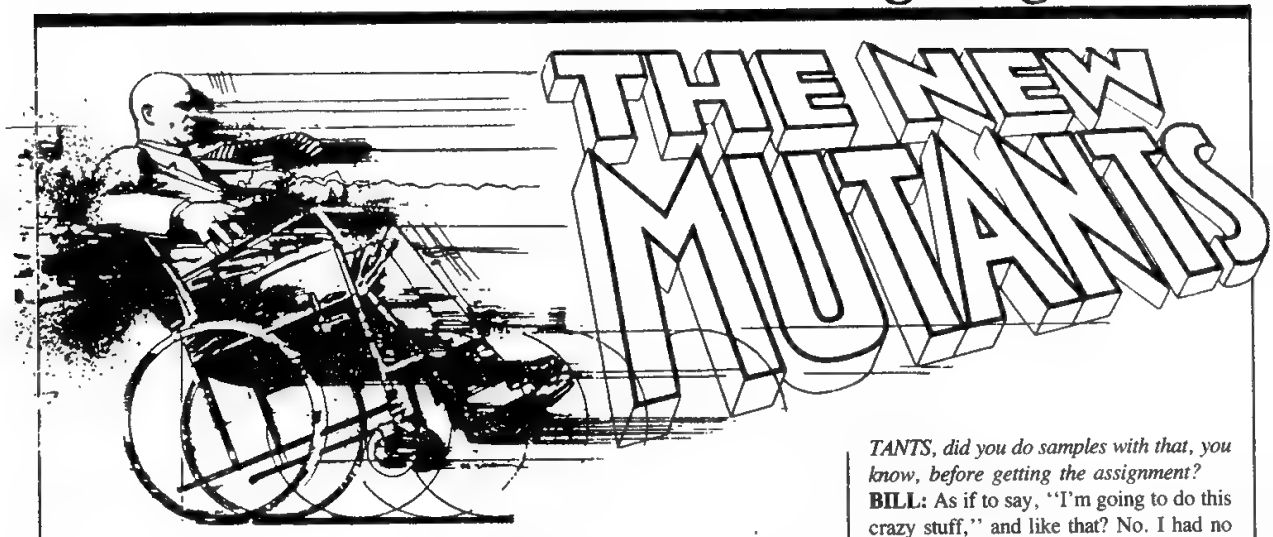
DWIGHT: *You need the counterpoint?*

BILL: Yeah, sure — the yin and the yang.

DWIGHT: *For awhile there you were known as the artist who could virtually out-Adams Neal Adams — in MOON KNIGHT, for instance — and then you surprised and shocked a lot of people with the new style that you brought to NEW MUTANTS. What was the style's genesis?*

BILL: Partly it was a good mixture of frus-

"No — I had no idea I was going to do



tration over feeling unseen by the critics and an innate desire to grow. I felt very dismissed. I felt that they were not looking at what was inherently mine. If you look at all of the **Neal Adams** "clones" that there have been, I got the most *shit* for it all because I did it better than anybody else.

DWIGHT: *Well, you're certainly not a clone.*

BILL: No, but people still remark, make occasional remarks, from some dark cave someplace — people that have obviously not been watching my work. *(Laughter.)* But I think that's probably why I got a lot of flak. In a way I think it's water under the bridge at this point, because I feel that I learned a great deal about art and drawing, and basically, Neal's stuff got me through a lot of rough times. As obsessive as I got about it, it really was a lot for me to hold onto. It really was a focus for me during some pretty rough times as a kid. After I let it go — which is really a hard thing to do — it's like *trying* to fall asleep or like saying you're going to have a good time now, damn it!, and consciously setting out to do it. Simply letting go is not as easy as it sounds — so when I did start to let go of it more I went gangbusters. I felt there was a whole world out there. I was basically a whore — I was sleeping around with every style there was, and loving it! *(Laughter.)* It was all out there. Basically, what I wanted to do was, say, "Look, this is what comics can be!" What's happening now, at least with what Frank and I are doing, **Alan Moore** to a certain extent, is we're taking the way we view the world and bringing that to the medium. Back when comics first started out they were basically done by a lot of Jewish artists — almost like psychotherapy, like art therapy — as a way of dealing with Nazis and feelings of powerlessness. It was also very heavily political, which is the way comics should go — subversion — underground. They should *not* be main stream, it kills their effectiveness. I think that our culture right now is ready for a major comic-book event, in terms of punk politics and along the lines of what happened with French films in a way, and that kind of popularity.

LYRICAL WAITRESS: Is everything alright here?

BILL: Nah. A real bitch. The Jag blew a rod and the Rolls has a *pate* stain on the fur carpet. But comics are improving.

DWIGHT: *Fine.*

BILL: I think that's sort of what's happening.

DWIGHT: *So you think that comics are poised on the brink of breaking out of their traditional markets? Or the traditional area that has kept them fenced in?*

BILL: I don't think they're all going to break out of it. Some will break out (like DARK KNIGHT) and some will always be what they're gonna be. I mean, let's face it, in a lot of ways they're popular culture, and there are people that have a major investment in keeping comics the way they are, so they're going to be that for as long as they last. There's also going to be, I hope and I feel and would like to think, an alternative in the sense of awareness by a lot of readers; so that there's going to be more work that's going to be produced like DARK KNIGHT, like **Alan Moore**'s exquisite writing, like ELEKTRA — and also a place for the level of integrity, sophistication and chance-taking that I feel that I want to bring to the art, and creators like **Jay Muth**, **DeMatteis**, and others of their ilk. There's got to be more of an awareness.

DWIGHT: *Getting back to the introduction of your new art style on NEW MUTANTS, did you do samples with that, you know, before getting the assignment?*

BILL: As if to say, "I'm going to do this crazy stuff," and like that? No. I had no idea I was going to go that way. I had no idea. When I did NEW MUTANTS, I guess — the first issue looks fairly representational, not so much of a jump from the last issue of MOON KNIGHT as the last issue of NEW MUTANTS was from the first. There was an incredible jump in there, but it was just the natural progression. Frenetic as it was, it was part of the influences. I felt like a process of streamlining was taking place. And also the progress of, "Hey, let's just have some fun here!" I think that I'd gone through all of the styles of art — involving **Chuck Jones** and animation . . . I mean, **Peter Sanderson**, who was **Ann Nocenti**'s assistant at the time and I just started having these conversations, and one thing led to another about animation. He turned me on to a lot that I was not aware of with animation. Consequently, we became very good friends — and I think a lot of the NEW MUTANTS work sort of came as a result of those conversations with Peter. "Like, wow, it's fun stuff!" It started to reflect in my work. So **Peter Sanderson** is partially to blame, and partially to credit for what transpired. How is that for passing the buck? Hello, Peter.

DWIGHT: *Did you have any fears of how editors or other professionals, would react to this new style of art that you were hitting them with?*

BILL: I never really thought about catching any flak. I think towards the end the heads started to turn.

DWIGHT: *Towards the end? That's unusual. Usually it'd be in the beginning.*

BILL: Of the series? No. I think what happened was that people anticipated my MOON KNIGHT style, and they got it for an issue or two or three, and then it gradually started to change; and it was basically, "Where's Bill going?" I have to admit that I don't think I could have stayed on it for much longer, anyway. I think I stayed

this crazy stuff with NEW MUTANTS.''

on it maybe four or five or six issues longer than I wanted to. And so ultimately what happened was — I got no real flak — things pretty much went without a hitch. I think if I tried to do those issues *now* it'd be a problem. God, it would be shitty hell. So I can't really say that anybody gave me a hard time over it. Even I at one point went, ''This is all kinds of neat but let's pull it in a little bit.'' I felt that (but only for a second).

I think a lot of artists have preconceptions about what comics are and what you can use to do them. I never set out to push it. I never thought, ''I want to go nuts with this stuff.'' I just wanted to work out some stuff that had to come out. To get across the point of the story in the most effective visual way. I think whenever I set out to do anything ''crazy'' it's like it's straightjacketing right from the beginning because it's a preconception. A lot of stuff that works out the best is when it's just simply what it's going to be. Nobody sets out and says, ''I'm gonna do a masterpiece now.'' It isn't for the artist to judge or prejudge. I just sit down to do a piece of work and if it works out, fine — that's a plus — and if other people attach something to it that's up to them. There are pieces that I've done I want stick my arm down my throat instead of just two fingers! *(Laughter.)* It's like, ''My God, how could I do this?'' So I never really set out to do anything crazy. It was just simply: ''Wouldn't it be fun to try this'' or ''This seems the best way to do it.'' But ''I'm gonna be intense now!'' — it just doesn't wash. You either are or you're not. *(Laughter.)*

DWIGHT: *What has been your biggest disappointment in the art that you did for NEW MUTANTS?*

BILL: *(Pause.)* The biggest disappointment? That's a really good question. I suppose the biggest disappointment is also the greatest asset. Partly, it's the polarity. I love the fact that it seemed to add a new dimension or something, a new wrinkle — it was so much fun to do. I feel that as far as a body of work, the twelve or thirteen issues that Chris and I did, I'm very proud of those issues. I feel like in some ways it didn't work out, but in other ways I feel like it was a really nice thing to see; that we were pushing stuff around that way. The biggest disappointment is that I feel like it was left unfinished. I wish it could have been a finite series. A limited run. A set run, like ELEKTRA. It sort of trailed off for me. *Pffft.* That didn't sit well with me. I left in the middle of a three-parter, or the beginning of a three-parter or something like that, ''Fat Karma'' — and I feel like...I could have stayed on it but it's almost like...I like there to be a beginning and a middle and an end to something, which is why I like working on ELEKTRA. It's mine and no one comes in after I'm through with the run and fucks with the statement we made.

DWIGHT: *Do you think that style would have been possible, for instance, in 1970 or thereabouts?*

BILL: Absolutely not. The seeds may have been there. It's like RAN. **Kurosawa** could not have done RAN if he hadn't done everything else before it. Everything in its time. ELEKTRA #1 is ELEKTRA #1 because it was ready to be ELEKTRA #1 — the way it looks, the way it feels, the way it reads. It's not like something that can be done every month the same way. And, if anything, I feel that the work that I do is volatile enough, and I'm changing all the time — so I feel like that's part of why the work is always looking the way that it does. Choosing and discarding.

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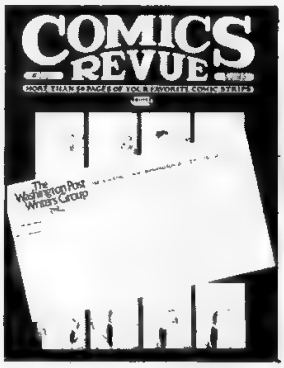

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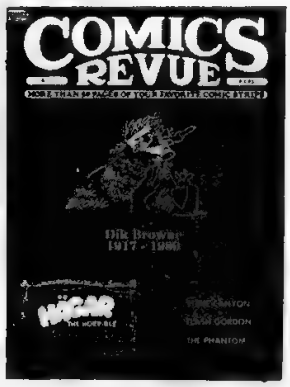

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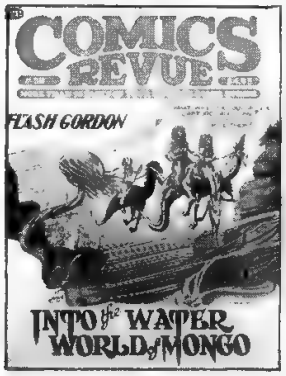

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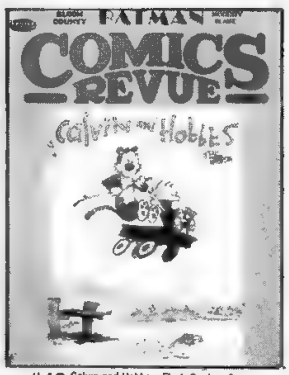

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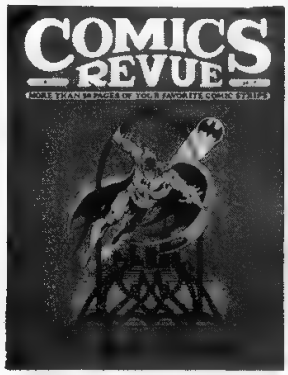

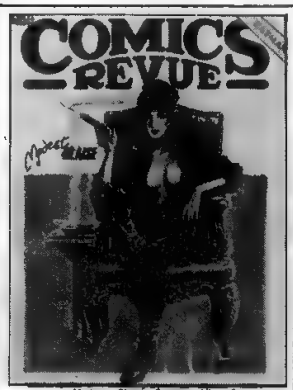

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A COMICS INTERVIEW PUBLICATION

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"I'm a butcher drawing with burnt cork."

DWIGHT: *Do you feel that you're now being typecast with a new identity?*

BILL: Yeah, and it's odd. I am being typecast as being, "The Weird Artist." I don't want to be an adjective. I could do very very traditional work — it just so happens that I have a different drummer that I'm walking to right now. I think people who are typecasting me — I've had several situations where the people have come up to me with scripts and, I've agreed to do them, and they're the most boring pieces of shit. And they say, "Well, we figured *you* could make it interesting." But I guess I choose to take that challenge.

DWIGHT: *Putting the onus on you.*

BILL: Yeah. And I want to also do the really good straight stuff which I'm doing on ELEKTRA. Straight stuff. Weird stuff. Punk stuff. I want to be able to go all across the board. A lot of the primal scream stuff, the real bizarre stuff, was sort of me exorcising a lot of demons on comic-book paper. As I was pushing, the people somehow took notice of it. And people will grab ahold of the very obvious things and they will miss a lot of the sublety underneath. They'll grab ahold of the biggest sign they can see and they say, "Oh, that's what this stuff is. It's, like, all bug-eyes and crazy things."

DWIGHT: *The people need labels, it seems.*

BILL: Yeah. It doesn't really pan out. It's like the platypus. It is a mammal? Is it a duck? Is it a fish? Mineral? What happens is a lot of people, in order to figure out what it is, rather than just to reclassify it, they cut it apart in different sections and categorize it; the bill goes here, the fur goes here, the webbed feet go here, the tail goes here. And what happens is that they kill it! They dissect it to see what makes it tick and in the process it stops ticking. So people like to label. It's pretty funny. Let them keep guessing. I like keeping them on their toes. I want to be able to do anything. I don't want people to only say, "Well, when we want something artistically nuts we'll come to you." Nuts to them.

DWIGHT: *Going back to your comment about the bureaucracy that you said ELEKTRA is attacking, it almost sounds like you're attacking the fact that a bureaucracy of sorts is labeling Bill Sienkiewicz the weird artist, and beforehand they labeled him the Neal Adams clone, and maybe next year they'll label him something else...*

BILL: Right. I don't know what next year's monicker will be. I don't know where I'm going to be heading, myself. I've heard all kinds of adjectives. One of the ones I like is innovative. That one is okay. But I also like the ones that say I'm a butcher who draws with a piece of burnt cork. How innovative! *(Laughter.)* People have said that. "It looks like you've drawn this issue with burnt cork," or whatever. Whenever I get letters like that I want to send them thank-you notes 'cause I haven't tried that yet. Because comics are commercial art, I walk a line, partly what I'm bringing to it is personal: what art is to me; it's like the artist's self-discovery, the way he looks at the world. That's sort of like putting a **Frank Stella** piece on a Kellogg's Cornflakes box — it's taking a chance in the sense of being commercial. It just so happens that comics can do that kind of thing, you know — and visually there's a lot more subtext. Frank does stories that deal definitely with the bureaucracy, a lot of stuff that's going on with the world. Everybody. The point is to take that stuff and turn it into entertainment. Luckily enough, people seem to be coming along for the ride.

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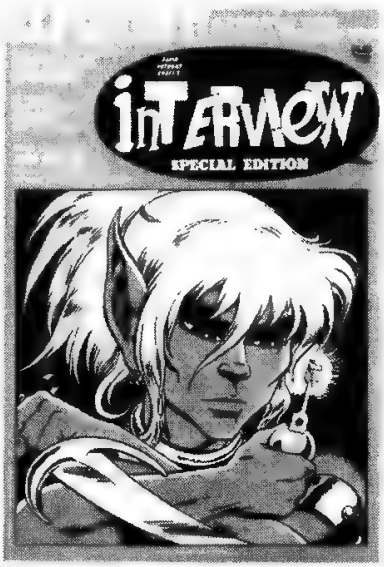
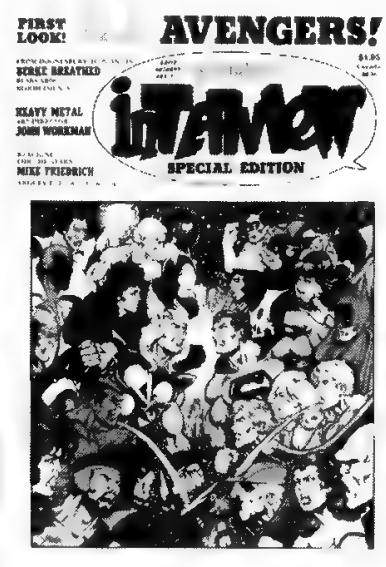


ELFQUEST. A pow-wow with the Pinis on Elfquest, the creation of an elfin world. John Costanza, letterer, tells all of being an artist. Stan Lee goes Hollywood, and the beginning of a legend now the Comico bunch, on their dreams and schemes for the future. Pini cover.



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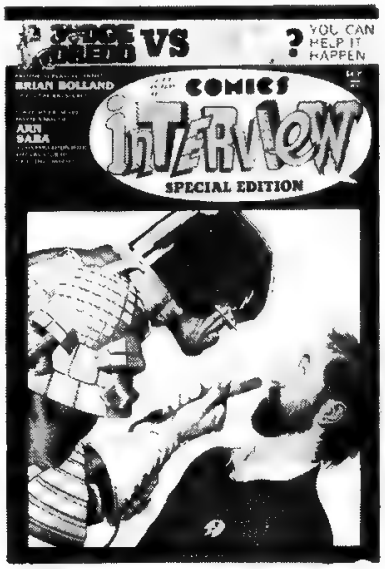
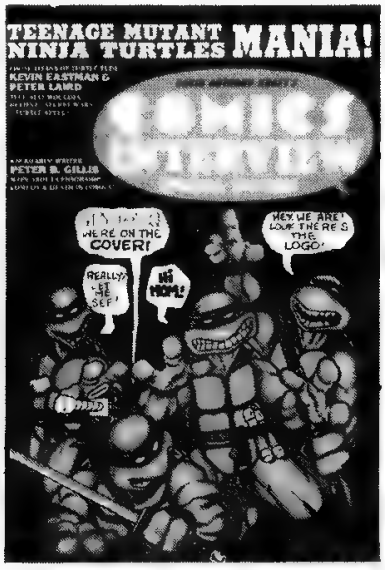
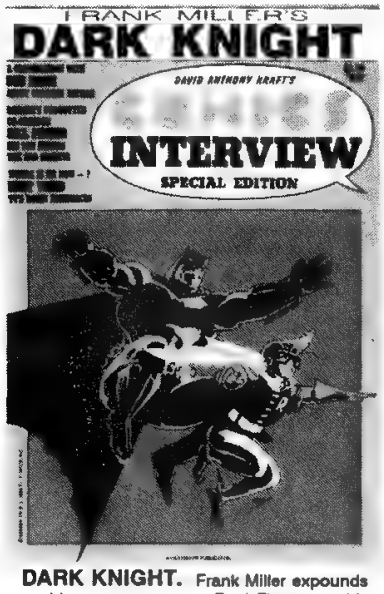


JUDGE DREDD VS BATMAN. Brian Bolland spills the beans on this project, first time round. Arn Saba saddles Neil the Horse. Don and Maggie Thompson give an inside view of the Comics Buyer's Guide. Bolland cover.

ROBOTECH. Carl Macek & Neil Vokes - from TV to comics - tell why Robotech's a hit. Phil Foglio - Hugo Award winning Sci-Fi artist mumbles about Myth-Adventures, and Cat Yronwode on art for art sake and comics for comics sake. More. Vokes & Rankin cover.



TEENAGE NINJA MUTANT TURTLES. Kevin Eastman and Peter Laird give it up. How Turtles Mania began..(look where it went..) Stan Drake on the colorful career of his girls, Kelly Green and Blondie. Peter B. Gillis on censorship, comedy & death! Eastman & Laird cover.



DARK KNIGHT. Frank Miller expounds on his magnum opus. Fred Finger, on his father, Bill. Bob Kane, on the last 50 yrs since Bat birth. Jerry Robinson, on past memories. Burt Ward on the trouble with tights, and George Roussos on the early days. Miller cover.

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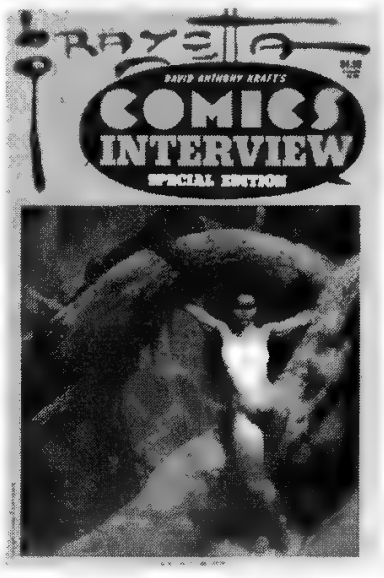

FRAZETTA. Frank Frazetta. This artist of great renown shares his thoughts on many media from comics to fine art. Frazetta cover

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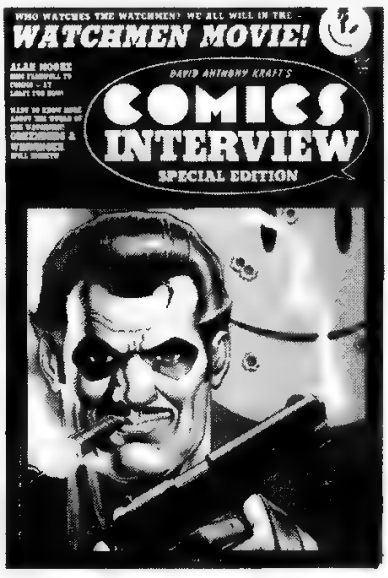

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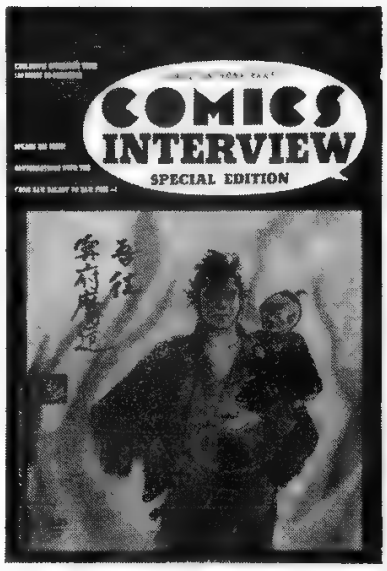
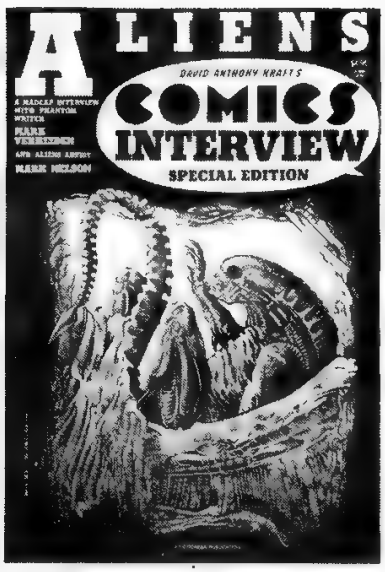


LONE WOLF. Frank Miller speaks his mind. Kazuo Koike and Goseki Kojima, creators of a Japanese legend, in a talk from Tokyo. Plus First Comics crew Rick Obadiah, Kurt Goldzung, Alex Wald, Paul Guinan, Willie Schubert and Rick Oliver. Kojima cover.



ALIENS. Mark Nelson and Mark Verheiden point out the positive and negative problems of dealing with Aliens. Mike Richardson and Randy Stradley on directing a Dark Horse, and managing freelance talent. Nelson cover.

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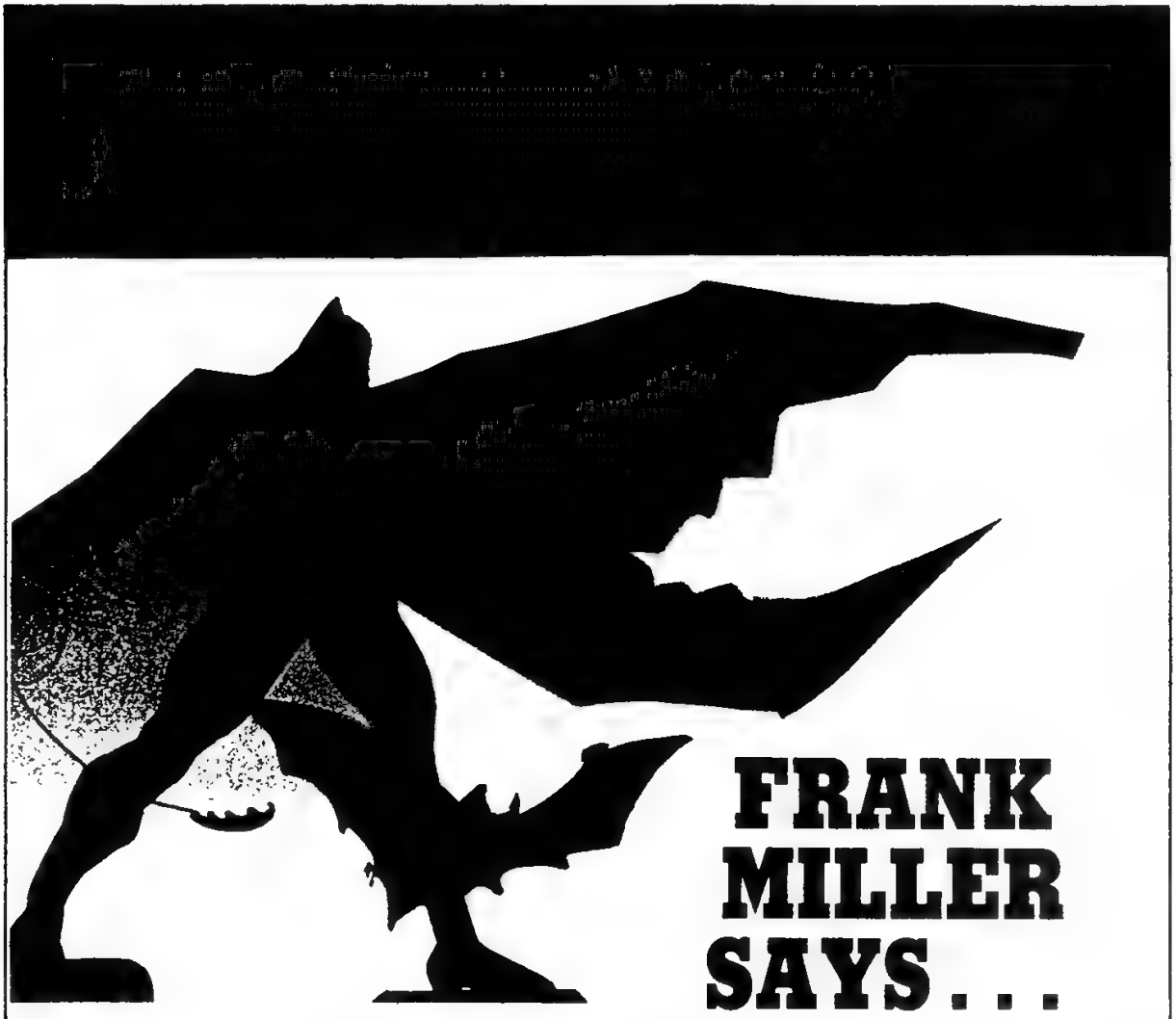

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FRANK MILLER SAYS...

Frank Miller was one of the featured guests at the 1986 Mid-Ohio-Con, a benefit for the March of Dimes, held in Mansfield, Ohio. His stage appearance concentrated on the issue of Censorship and Ratings in comics. Delayed due to a $47. speeding ticket, our reporter, Kirk Groeneveld, joined Miller's comments in progress.

Other guests, including John Byrne, Bill Sienkiewicz, Dave Sim (CEREBUS), Dick Giordano, John Totleben (MIRACLEMAN), Stephen Bissette (SWAMP THING), Tom Batiuk & Jerry Shamray (FUNKY WINKERBEAN/JOHN DARLING!) were on hand. Some of the guests added their comments and questions during Frank's appearance...

FRANK MILLER: Film is regulated, TV is. One thing that has been held up as sacred in America is literature. They don't rate books. They're smart enough to realize that they've got no right. And the only people who would end up setting up that kind of system are always the wrong people.

And as soon as we start saying "Yeah, you can rate us," what we're doing is saying, "Jerry Falwell is right." We're saying that they have a right and can tell us what to do.

FELLOW PANELIST: *Extreme right! (Much laughter.)*

FRANK: I think we'd discourage work that wasn't GP. For one thing, what it would do — what I think it would do — is this: it would change the way people would think about them, because they'd be shooting for different ratings. And it would wave a big red flag to all the imitation Christians out there who are going to war on Art.

I don't see a single good purpose it could serve.

AUDIENCE: *Don't you think that the commercial aspects of the business would kick in, and if there was a rating system, that when the people with the money found out that the X-rated stuff sold better, CASPER would be X-rated without any change in content?*

FRANK: Much like **Lucas** went through with STAR WARS to get a rating of PG? Yeah, it's possible.

AUDIENCE: *So rating would be pointless, either way.*

FRANK: Yeah, yeah And a waste of everyone's time and money.

AUDIENCE: *Do you change your style depending on how or where your work will be published?*

FRANK: Oh, that's just it...I find myself writing completely differently depending on who I'm working with, what format it's in, and the character.

ELEKTRA: ASSASSIN was completely written when **Bill Sienkiewicz** got it. After he illustrated it, I completely rewrote

semi-hysterical person's sex hang-ups.''

it to take better advantage of what he'd put in.

With DAREDEVIL, the goal was to do a much more straight-forward crime adventure. And with ELEKTRA, it's being allowed to run away with itself — on its own little strange tangents — I'm really enjoying working on it.

AUDIENCE: *Are you concerned with the industry reaction or lack of response to the push toward censorship?*

FRANK: Right! Noise is starting to happen. People are starting to get frightened. I'm just very worried, because the comics industry did not exactly act...couragously, last time there was a threat. You know, **Bill Gaines** was left standing out there alone while everyone else was folding the tents up. I think people may be folding up the tents before the invasion, this time.

AUDIENCE: *Are you getting any pressure from vocal religious groups in response to your work or other creators' work?*

FRANK: There's a lot of that going on, right now. There's a lot of pressure from a fairly small group of people, who are largely using — of all things! — THE BIBLE to preach pure hatred. It's affected TV terribly...that's why TV is so unwatchable...because people think in censorship terms when writing this stuff.

FELLOW PANELIST: Do you feel that ratings will affect all comic art, including newspaper strips?

FRANK: It might not directly affect you. It will most certainly affect me in what I am to do. Once the notion gets accepted, it never goes away. We've still got that stupid Comics Code and it hasn't done anything in 30 years. I mean, it was invented as a cover: something to wave at the Senate sub-committee to say "Don't censor us, we're already taken care of."

AUDIENCE: *Do you see a need for ratings to protect the young reader — or for self-controls?*

FRANK: I don't know. I don't like the idea of the industry becoming a place that thinks in those terms. I've seen what it's done to every other field. And comics, right now, are in a very, very vulnerable shape. They're on the verge of breaking into a new acceptance...ah, public perception is changing about them... people are about to accept it and write news stories with a whole new idea of comic books: that adults can do it.

But that's a very vulnerable thing right now, it's a very tentative thing, and it could go away over night. And I want to claim a bunch, a lot, of new territory here.

AUDIENCE: *What form do you want to take comics and the industry into?*

FRANK: I really don't know. I mean, I've got ideas about the kind of comics that I want to do — I really love the fact that

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"We've still got that stupid comics code."

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a bunch of us are here doing this, right now. If you walk around and look at the guest list of this convention, you'll see represented here more different kinds of comics than probably existed five years ago. I think the field is changing fundamentally. I think it may be a change for the better.

AUDIENCE: *What ideas do you have in the works right now?*

FRANK: *(Humorously.)* I'm not...I'm retiring. *(grins.)* I got some new stuff that I'm working up, but I can't really talk about it right now.

AUDIENCE: *Do you have any particular characters or heroes that you'd really like to write?*

FRANK: I've gotten a lot of them out of my system. I mean, Batman was just a real kick...ever since I've been 6 years old, that was, like, the big hero to me. And when I started using Superman in DARK KNIGHT! **John Byrne** and I were talking yesterday, and we were both apparently having opposite moments...when he used Batman and I used Superman, both of us were thinking, like, maybe I had picked the wrong character.

I mean, Superman is such a great character. But none of them are really leaping out. Captain America I finally got to do in a MARVEL FANFARE story. There's a lot of really good characters out there and a lot of characters that I think — with just a little twist — you'd have something special. Just ask **John Byrne:** I mean, he's taken over the big lame-duck book and moved it right to center stage. This stuff definitely can be brought back to life.

AUDIENCE: *What's your view on governments and big bureaucracies? You don't seem to trust them in your latest stories.*

FRANK: Yeah! What's your view on axe murderers? Like, you don't seem to trust them! *(Laughter.)*

FELLOW PANELIST: Frank, you voted Republican in the last eight elections — you know you did. *(More laughter.)*

AUDIENCE: *Why did you keep ELEKTRA as a villain, a ninja, after her rebirth in DAREDEVIL?*

FRANK: That's what the story seemed to call for. It's like, when you do Elektra, she's just Elektra — she's not like the bad girl with the heart of gold, who's gonna turn out nice in the end. Elektra is one of a number of characters that have been created to really describe genuine paranoia.

AUDIENCE: *In DARK KNIGHT #3, would Batman have killed the Joker if he'd been physically able to?*

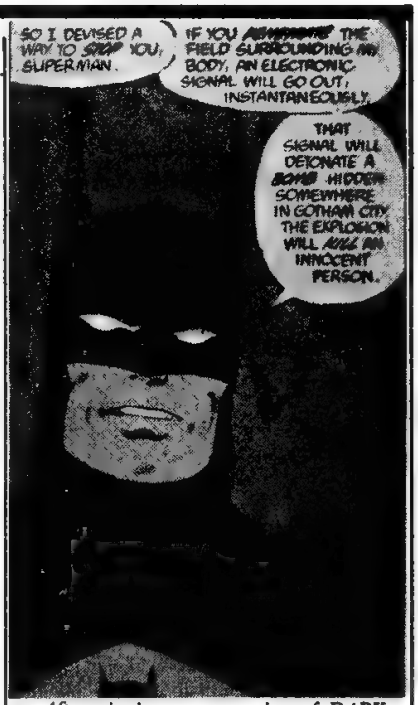
FRANK: This is the question that I keep getting: Was Batman just unable to kill the Joker, or was it an emotional thing with him? *(Confirming:)* Yeah, it was an emotional thing.

It's like my last conversation with **John Byrne** is working it's way into every question here: what I discovered is that when you're working on a character like that — like Superman — that legend is really what's in control. It won't allow itself to get tossed out. The essential things that make Superman Superman had to be in John's version and in ours.

And all that stuff I found, just worked its way back in. I always thought, "Robin??! Batmobile??! They're gone!" And they just came in, in slightly different forms. And I really was enjoying the fact that the character was as old as the legend is in the story. The fun of it was making it all work without going against the grain of the continuity.

AUDIENCE: *Why is it that you didn't have Batman dying?*

FRANK: It's like I was saying: you can't kill him! Okay — I'LL KILL HIM — but nobody's gonna believe it: he's Batman. I mean, you're not going to convince me that Supergirl is dead. If he would have died, that would have made him human, and he's not. He's like something superhuman — something that'll go on forever, in one form or another. And the closest thing to death is when he takes the costume off.


SO I DEVISED A WAY TO STOP YOU, SUPERMAN.
IF YOU ATTEMPT THE FIELD SURROUNDING MY BODY, AN ELECTRONIC SIGNAL WILL GO OUT, INSTANTANEOUSLY.
THAT SIGNAL WILL DETONATE A BOMB HIDDEN SOMEWHERE IN GOTHAM CITY. THE EXPLOSION WILL KILL AN INNOCENT PERSON.

After signing more copies of DARK KNIGHT and autographing a numbered, limited-edition copy for the March-Of-Dimes raffle, Frank edged his way toward the door. Our reporter asked him a few further questions about a rumor on the supposed rape-death of Jason Todd by the Joker. He stopped, looked puzzled, and clarified that, "Jason Todd was killed by the Joker, but as for the rape bit, I've never written that." Miller denied the scenario and disclaimed any such concept.

Frank had to catch a plane an hour earlier than planned. As a result, many fans are eagerly awaiting his return at the 1987 Mid-Ohio-Con in Mansfield, Ohio. Only time will tell if he will be able to return for the November 7-8 fundraiser this year.

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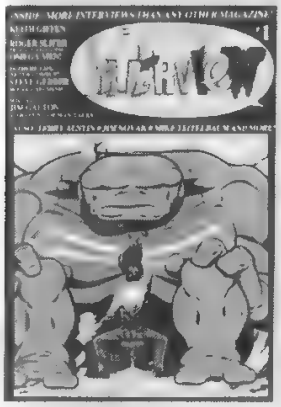

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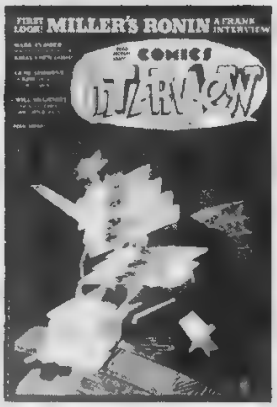

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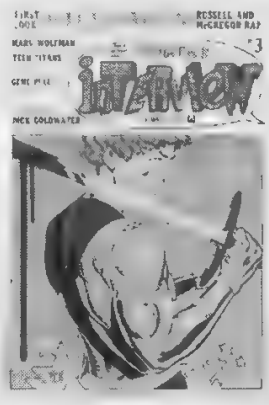

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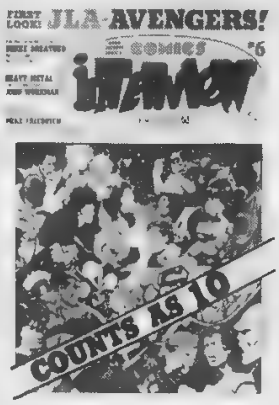

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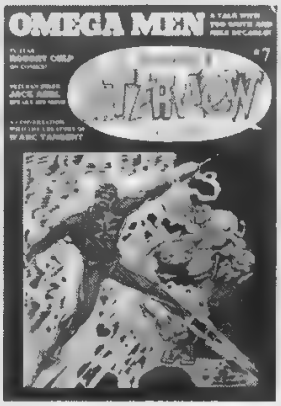

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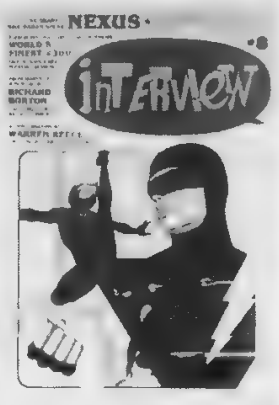
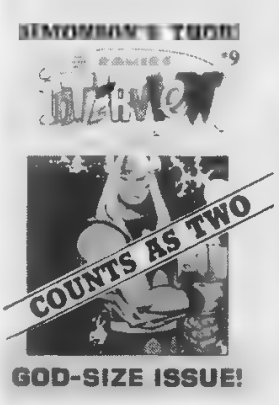


#8-$3.00 **Mike Baron** and **Steve Grant** discuss NEXUS, WHISPER and BADGER — **Bill Griffith** talks about ZIPPY THE PINHEAD — **Richard Burton** on British comics — plus more! Cover by **Steve Rude.**



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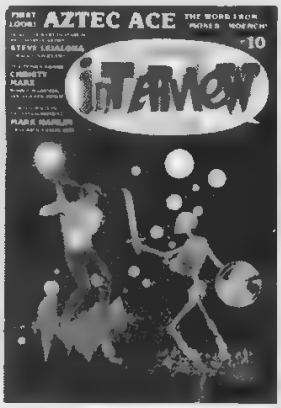

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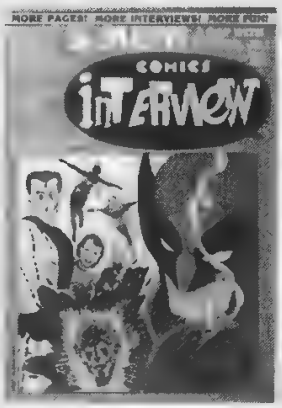

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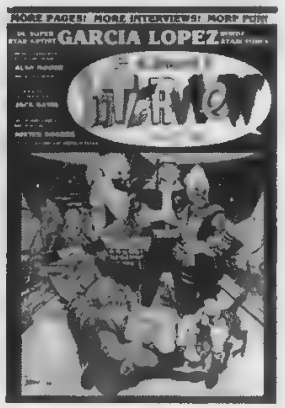

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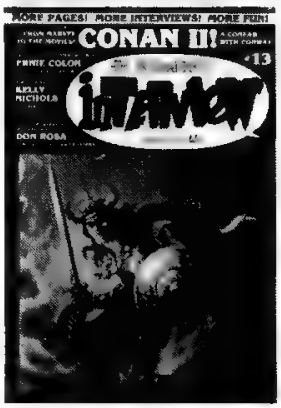

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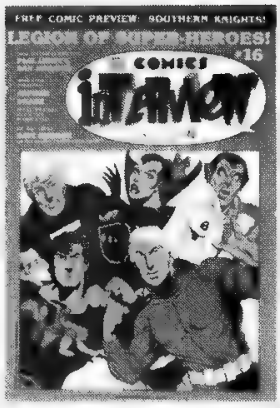

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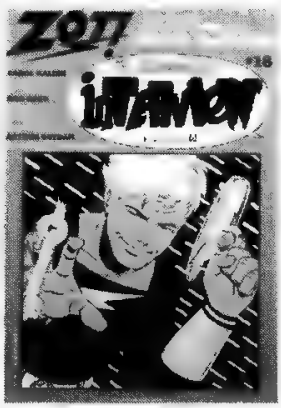

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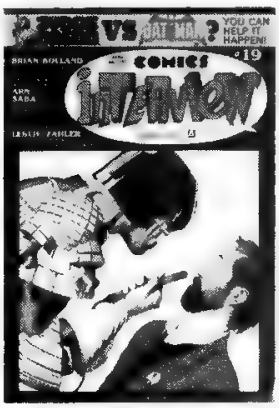

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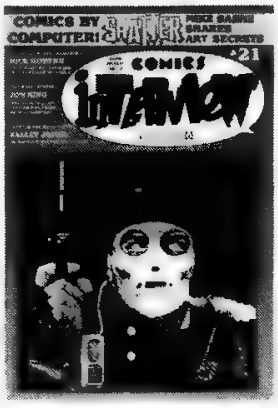

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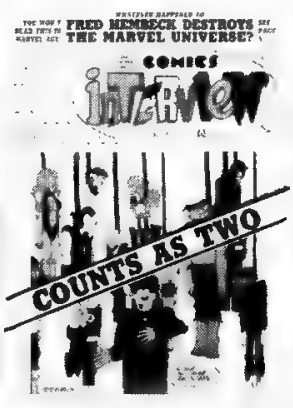

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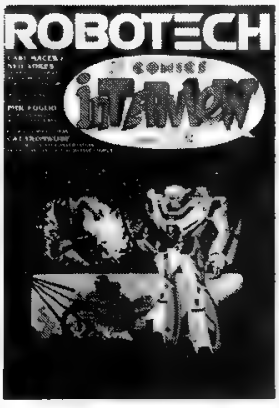

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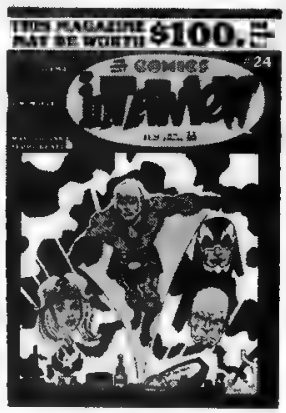

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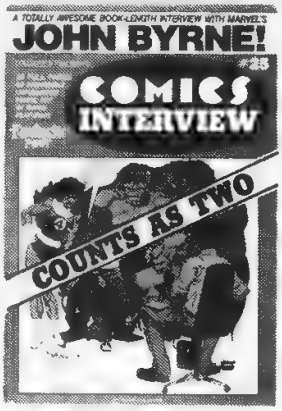

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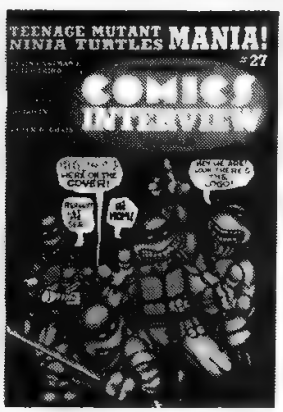

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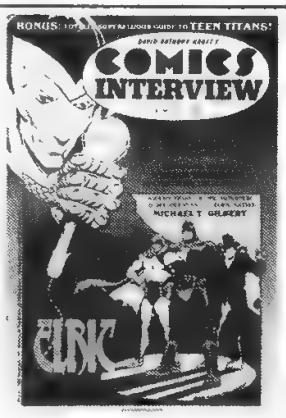

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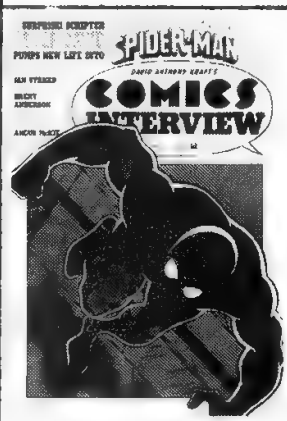

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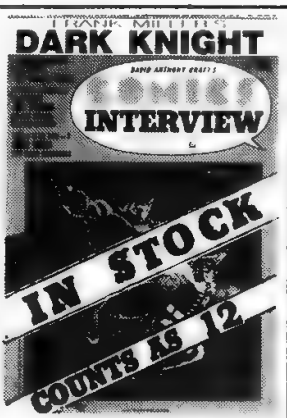

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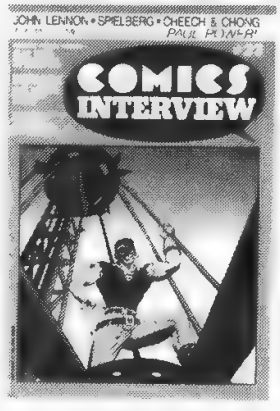

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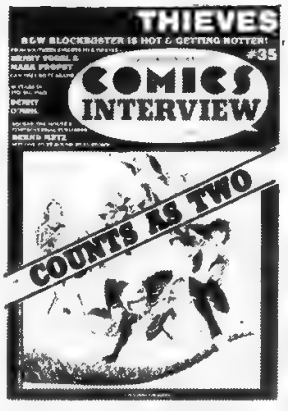

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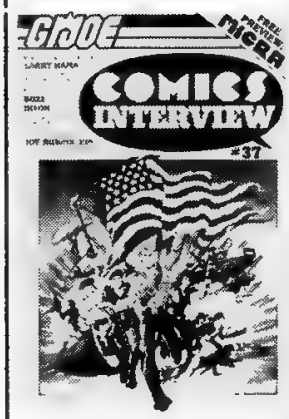

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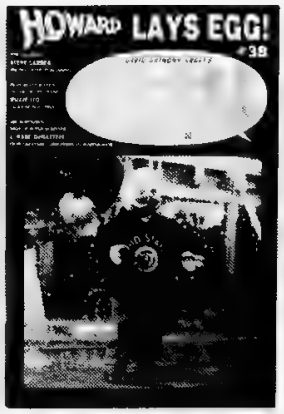

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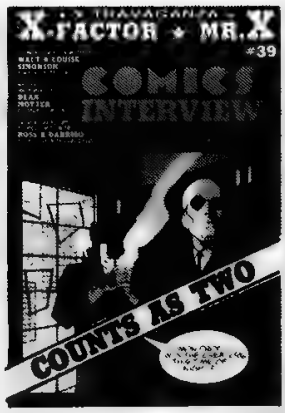

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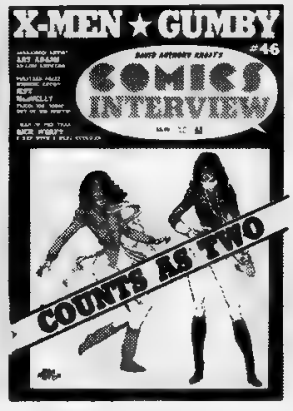

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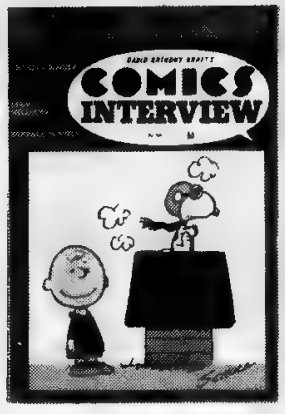

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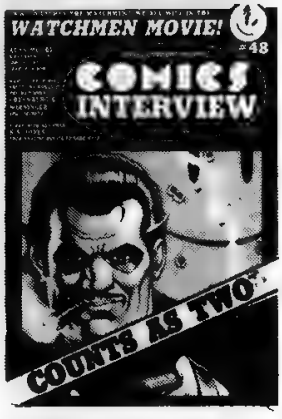

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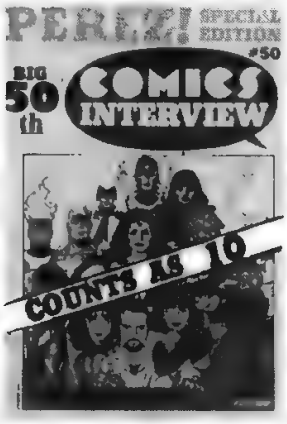

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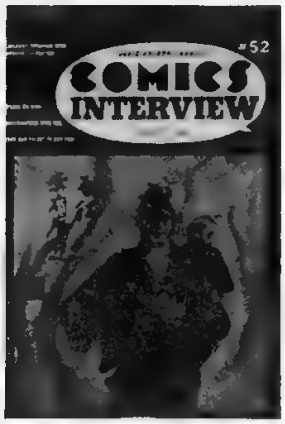

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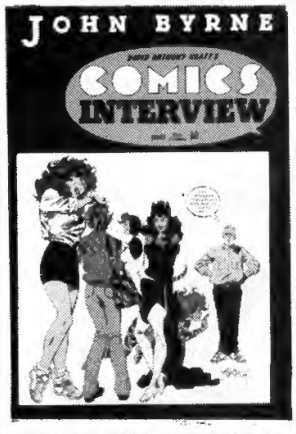

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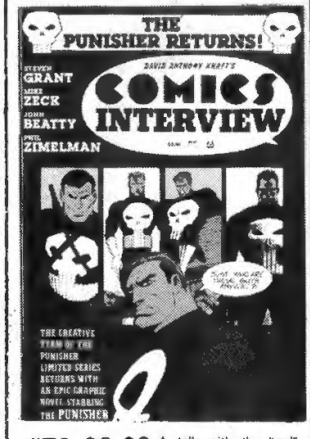

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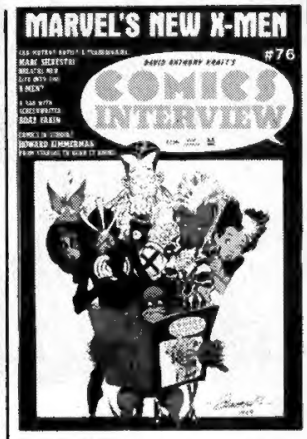

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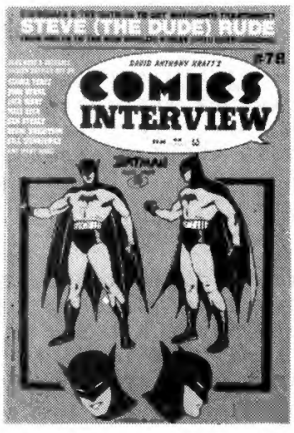

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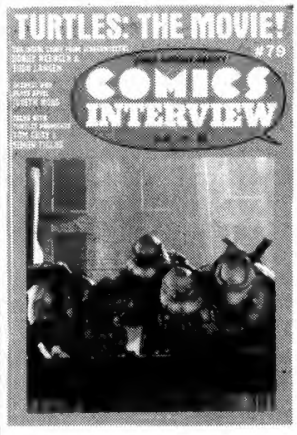

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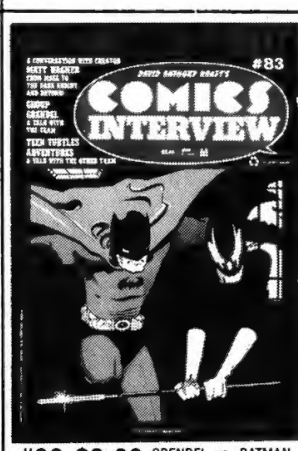

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